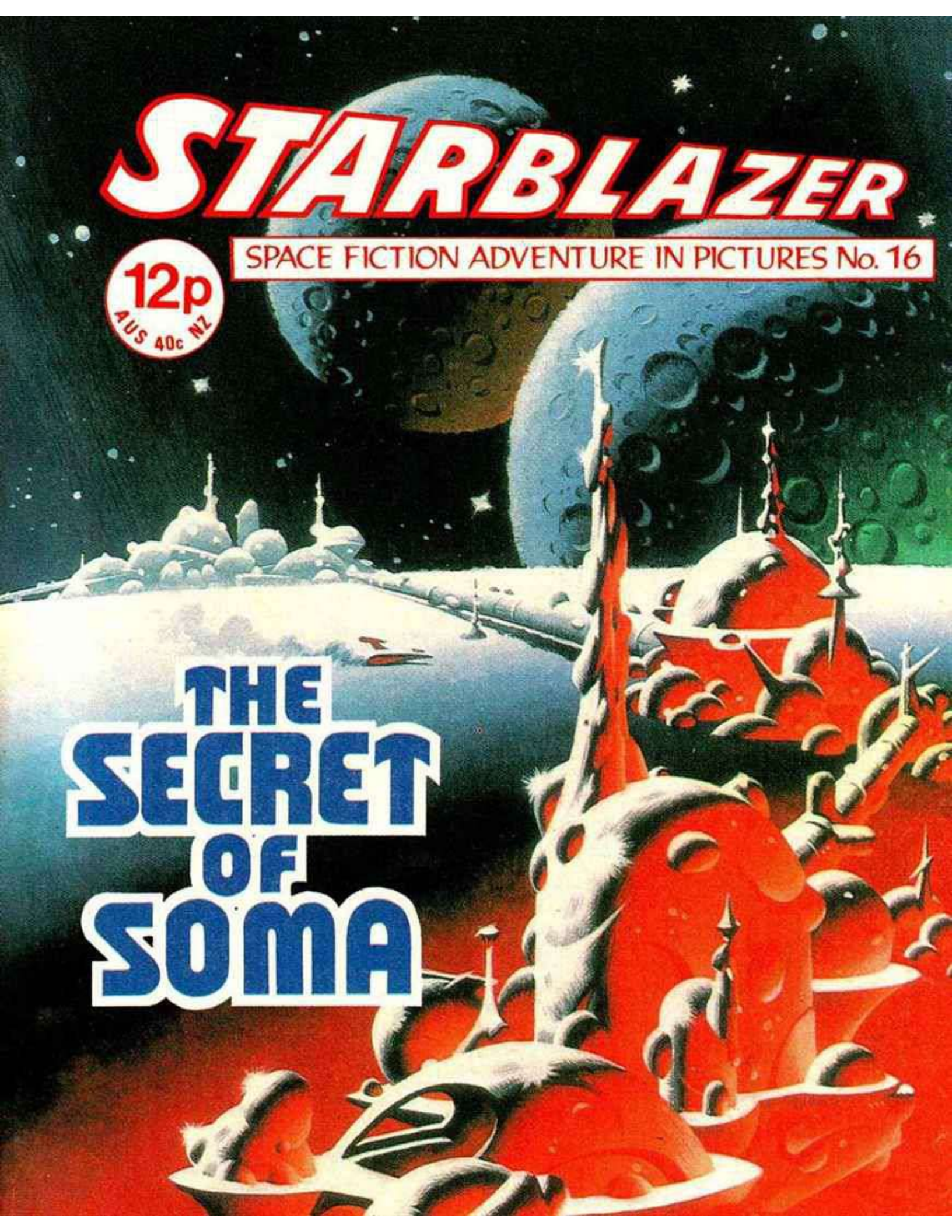


# STARBLAZER

12p  
AUS 40c NZ

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 16

## THE SECRET OF SOMA





# STARBLAZER



The Galaxy was a collection of independent worlds living and trading peacefully. Earth held a prominent place because of its supplies of ficamite—the mineral that made faster than light travel a reality. Most worlds traded and bartered for ficamite, but the Soma demanded more than their share, and threatened to wipe out the population of Earth unless their demands were met.

# THE SECRET OF SOMA

DEEP INSIDE A COMMUNICATIONS DOME, EARTH'S LEADERS HELD DESPERATE TALKS.











HE WAS ALLOWED ONE LAPTONE TO PREPARE  
FOR HIS JOURNEY, AND TO THE BEST OF OUR  
KNOWLEDGE, HE CONSTRUCTED THE FASTEST  
AND MOST DEVASTATINGLY POWERFUL VESSEL  
KNOWN TO MANKIND ...





WE HAVE SOME RECORDINGS FROM  
THE NEUTRON TELESCOPE WHICH  
WILL DEMONSTRATE WHAT THE  
MAGNON RAIDER CAN DO...



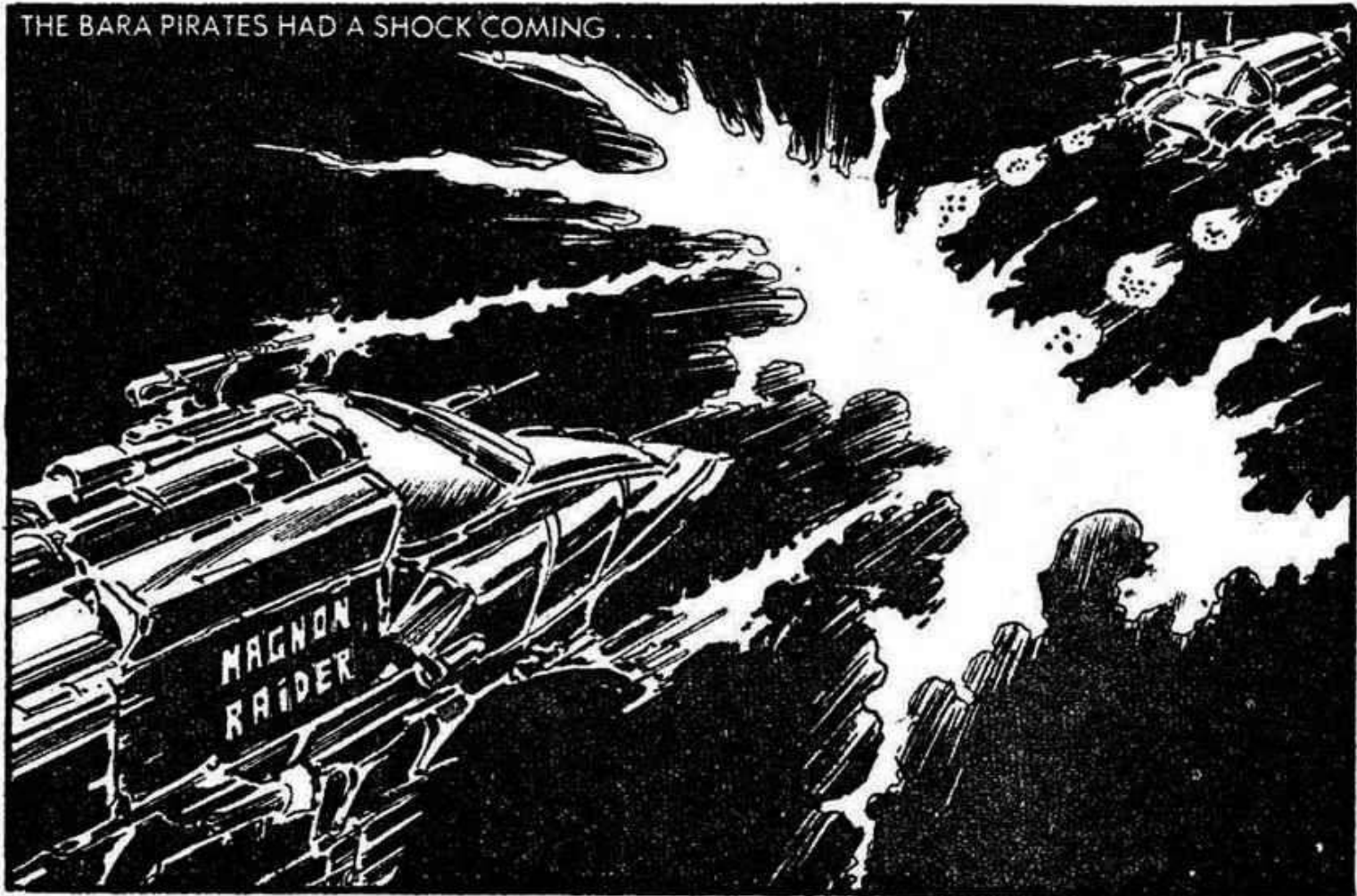


THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION WAS RIVETED TO THE SCREEN AS BETA CONTINUED.

ALMOST AS SOON AS HE CLEARED  
THE SOLAR SYSTEM, HE WAS  
ATTACKED BY BARA PIRATES. YOU  
WILL NOW WITNESS WHAT  
HAPPENED . . .

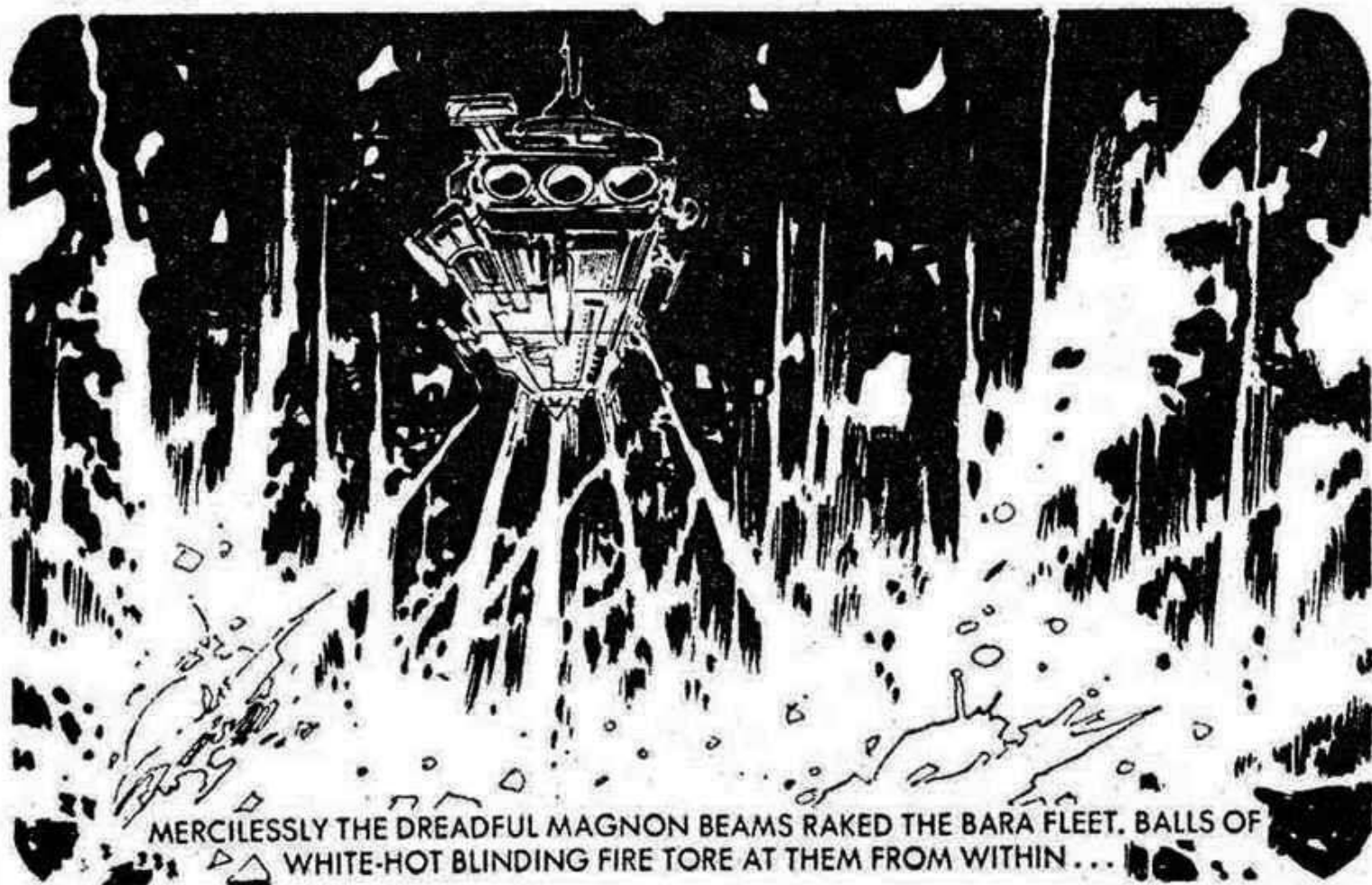


THE BARA PIRATES HAD A SHOCK COMING . . .






OUTMANOEUVRED AND OUTGUNNED, THE WORST WAS NOT OVER FOR THE OUTLAWS...




MERCILESSLY THE DREADFUL MAGNON BEAMS RAKED THE BARA FLEET. BALLS OF  
WHITE-HOT BLINDING FIRE TORE AT THEM FROM WITHIN...







THE LAST PIRATE FLED. YOU HAVE SEEN WHAT THE MAGNON RAIDER CAN DO. EARTH IS IN SERIOUS JEOPARDY, WE NEED THAT MAGNON RAIDER...



AND WE NEED THE MAN BEHIND IT... ZENOS.



WE BANISHED HIM FOR SMUGGLING. HOW CAN WE ASK HIM TO RETURN?



HIS TWO FRIENDS ARE STILL HERE. THEY ARE IN PRISON. WE WILL PROVIDE THEM WITH A SHIP AND THEIR FREEDOM FOR BRINGING US ZENOS AND THE MAGNON RAIDER. WE HAVE NO CHOICE. UNAIDED, WE ARE NO MATCH FOR THE SOMA.

BETA CONSULTED ZENOS' FRIENDS—NABRI FROM ALPHA XII, AND JO, THE DUMB SAMURAI.



NABRI AND JO WERE ESCORTED TO THE OLD ZX40 IN WHICH THEY WERE TO SEARCH FOR ZENOS.





NABRI AND JO ROARED AWAY FROM MOTHER EARTH—DESTINATION UNKNOWN.



BUT THE SOMA HAD SPOTTED THEM.

A FEEBLE EARTHLING SHIP IS TRYING  
TO SLIP BY THE MIGHTY SOMA  
FORCES.





THREE TINY SOMA FIGHTERS WHEELED AWAY FROM THE WARSHIP TO DESTROY THE OLD ZX40.





BUT NABRI HAD ANTICIPATED SUCH AN ATTACK,  
AND JO SAT ASTRIDE A SPACESCOOTER...  
READY AND WAITING.

YOU'RE TOO SMALL FOR THEM TO  
PICK UP, JO. LET THEM GET FAIRLY  
CLOSE, THEN GIVE IT TO THEM.

JO AND THE SPACE-BIKE SWEEP IN FOR THE KILL.

JO'S SEARING MAGNON FIRE RIPPED THROUGH THE SOMA AS NABRI BLASTED THE LEADER.



USELESS FOOLS. THEY DISGRACE THE SOMA FLEET. NAVIGATOR, WE WILL DESTROY THE FILTHY EARTHLINGS OURSELVES.



ON BOARD THE ZX40.







GO GET 'EM, JO.



YOU FOOL! CAN'T YOU BE TRUSTED TO DO ANYTHING. GET OUT OF THE WAY.

NOW WE'D BETTER RUN. OUR SHIELDS WON'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS.

THE ZX40 SNAPPED INTO FULL ACCELERATION.



THE CHIEF SOMA'S FACE APPEARED ON THE COMPUPANEL.

YOU GALACTIC REFUSE. YOU ARE STUPID ENOUGH TO TRY AND RUN FROM THE NOBLE SOMA WARSHIP. YOUR FEEBLE EFFORTS COULD LEAD TO THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF EARTH. I ORDER YOU TO STOP.



COME AND GET US FISH-FACE.



THEY HAVE INSULTED THE NOBLE  
SOMA. I WILL PUNISH THEM BEFORE  
THEY DIE.



IT'S NO GOOD, JO. WE'LL HAVE TO  
SURRENDER. THE SHIELDS CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE.  
IF WE DON'T THEY'LL BLOW US OUT OF THE  
SPACEWAYS.



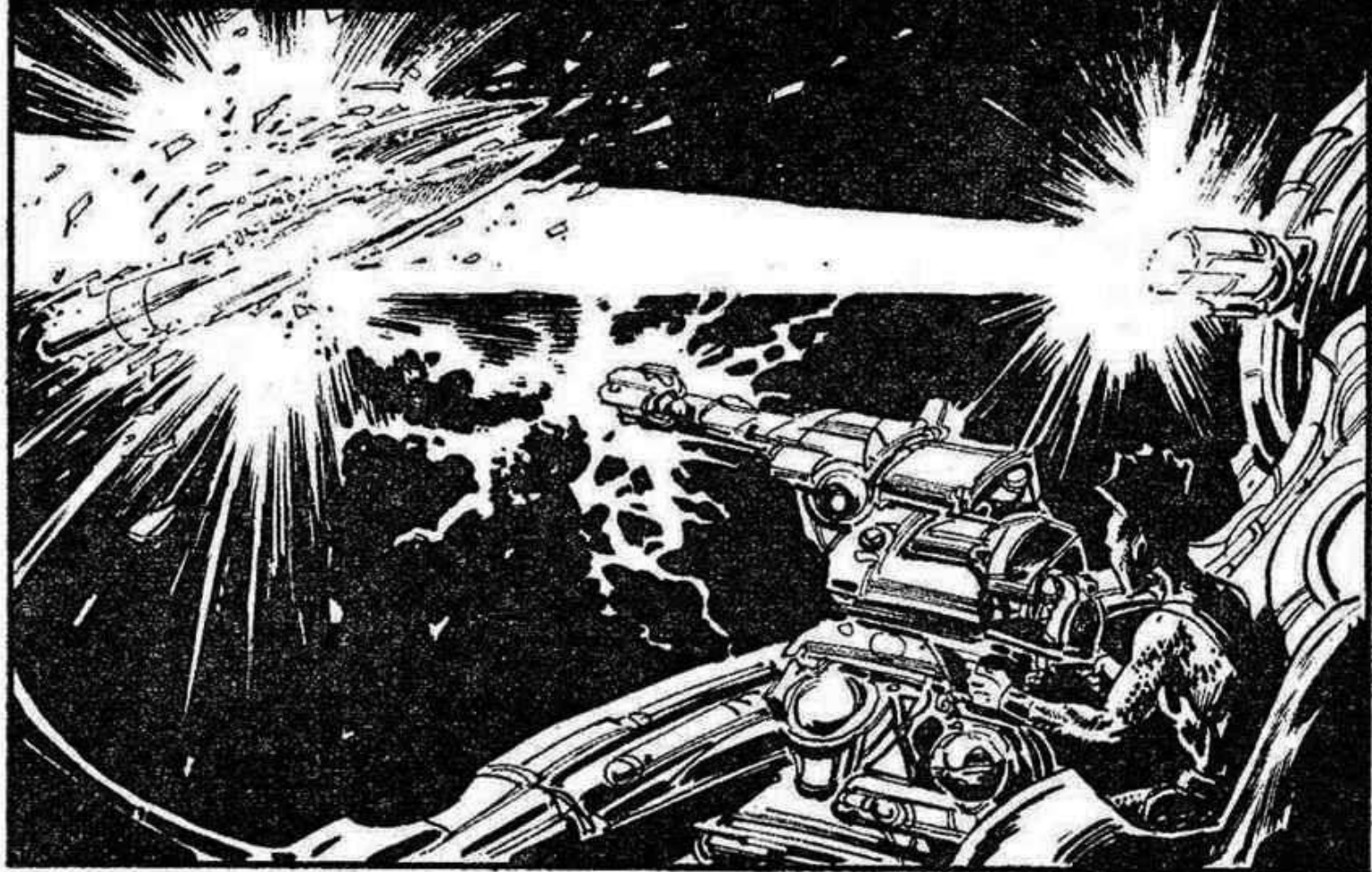


JO AND NABRI WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE SOMA SHIP.





THE OLD ZX40 HAD MADE HER LAST VOYAGE.



YOU WHO DARE TO DEFY THE SOMA  
WILL BE LOCKED AWAY TO  
CONSIDER YOUR FATE. YOU WILL  
NOT DIE QUICKLY. TAKE THEM  
BELOW.







WHEN THE SHAKING STOPPED.



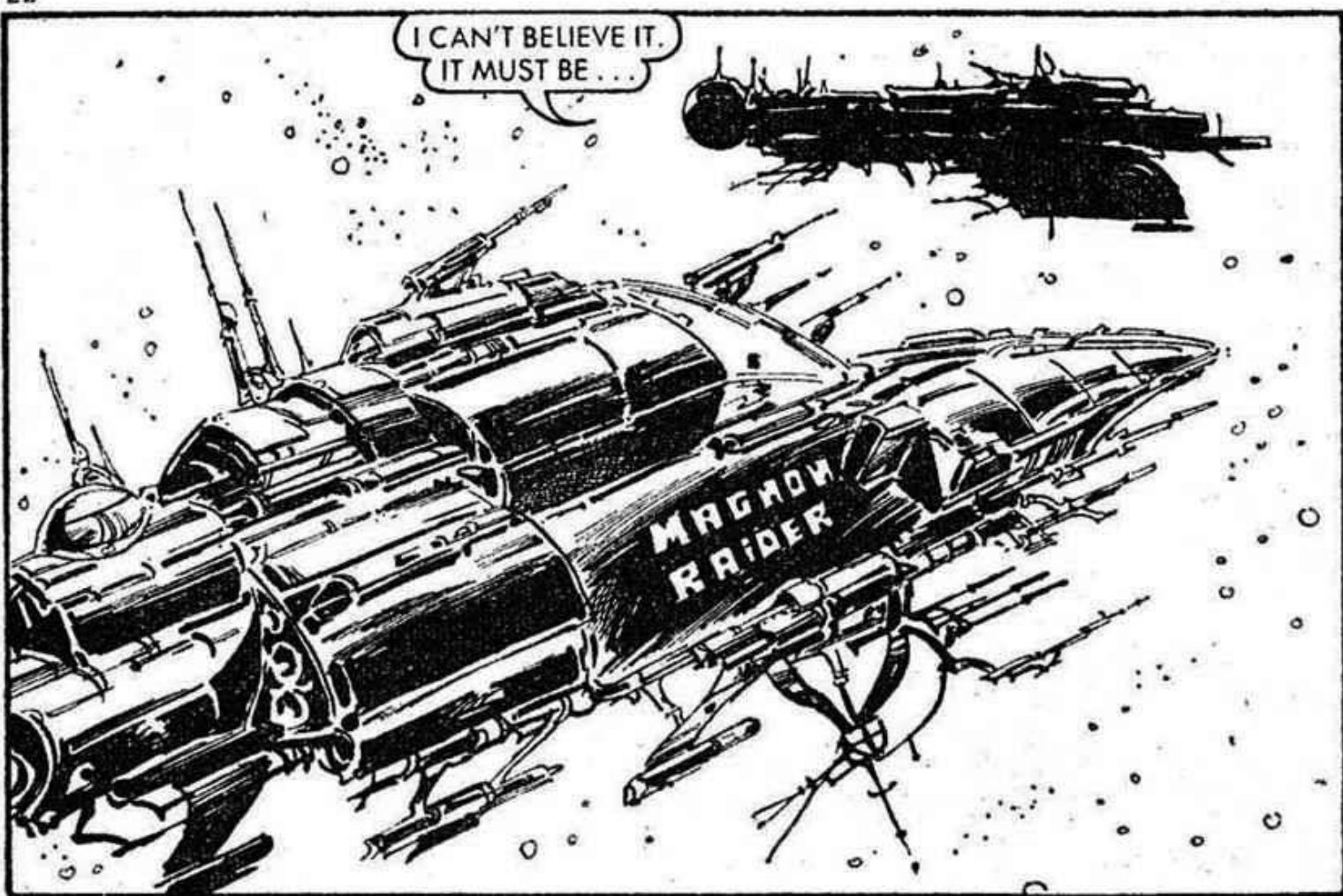
YOU WILL COME WITH US.



THIS TIME YOU ARE LUCKY. I SHOULD HAVE  
KILLED YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE...



THERE IS A VESSEL OUT  
THERE THAT DEMANDS YOUR  
RELEASE. IT IS A SUPERIOR  
VESSEL TO THIS ONE. WE  
HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO  
RELEASE YOU.







ZENOS... IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU  
AGAIN.



... SO THE COUNCIL WANTS  
YOU TO RETURN AND HELP BEAT  
OFF THE SOMA.

I HAD NO IDEA EARTH  
WAS IN SUCH A FIX.  
I'VE BEEN TO THE FAR  
REACHES OF THE  
GALAXY AND IT WAS  
ONLY OUT OF  
HOMESICKNESS THAT  
I CAME BACK AND  
SPOTTED THE OLD ZX  
BEING SHOT TO PIECES.

COMMUNICATIONS  
BETWEEN ZENOS AND  
THE EARTH COUNCIL  
WERE RESTORED.

WE ARE GRATEFUL THAT  
YOU ARE TO HELP US,  
ZENOS. OUR COMPUTERS  
ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.  
EVERYTHING WE KNOW  
ABOUT THE SOMA IS THERE.



I'LL LINK IN MY COMPUTER  
AND WE'LL TAKE IT FROM  
THERE.

WHILE THE COMPUTER WAS ABSORBING THE DETAILS OF THE SOMA, ZENOS EXPLAINED THE WORKINGS TO HIS TWO COMPANIONS.

... AND THAT'S THE COMPUTER. IT OBEYS THE SPOKEN WORD, BUT DON'T TRY TO BEAT IT AT CHESS—I CAN'T EVEN WIN AT THE OLD TWO DIMENSIONAL GAME ...

... THE MAGNON BANKS ARE FULLY CHARGED. ENOUGH TO KEEP US GOING FOR YEARS, AND THE COMPUTER CAN HANDLE TACTICS AS WELL AS GUNNERY ...

DANGER! DANGER! TWO CRAFT APPROACHING. SECTOR 9 AND CLOSING. SCREENS OUT. WEAPONRY ON STAND BY ...



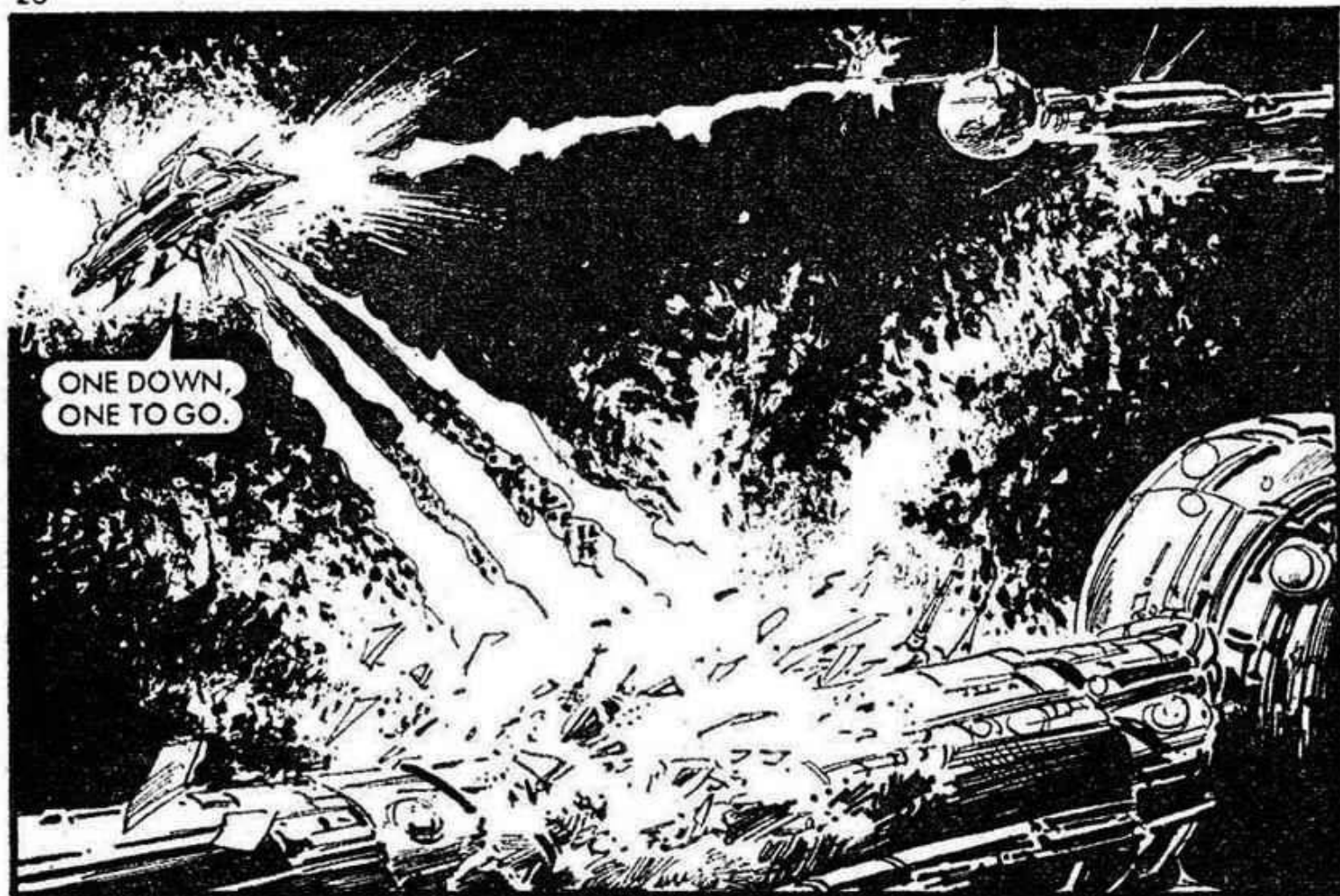


SOMA! I THINK THEY MEAN BUSINESS.  
HOLD YOUR FIRE, COMPUTER. LET'S SEE WHAT  
THEY HAVE TO SAY. KEEP THOSE SCREENS ON  
MAXIMUM.




THERE IS NO ESCAPE. OUR  
NOBLE FLEET IS ON THE  
WAY. SURRENDER  
IMMEDIATELY OR WE WILL  
DESTROY YOU.











THEY'RE SHOOTING LIKE MADMEN...  
AND HIT ONE OF THEIR VESSELS.


COMPUTER. LIGHT FACTOR 2. MAKE A GALATIC CIRCLE  
AND BRING US BACK TO THE DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH.

THE MAGNON RAIDER SNAPPED AWAY  
IN A VAST ARC THROUGH SPACE.

WE'LL LEAVE HER IN  
ORBIT. AS LONG AS  
SHE'S IN THE SHADOW  
THE SOMA CAN'T PICK  
HER UP.

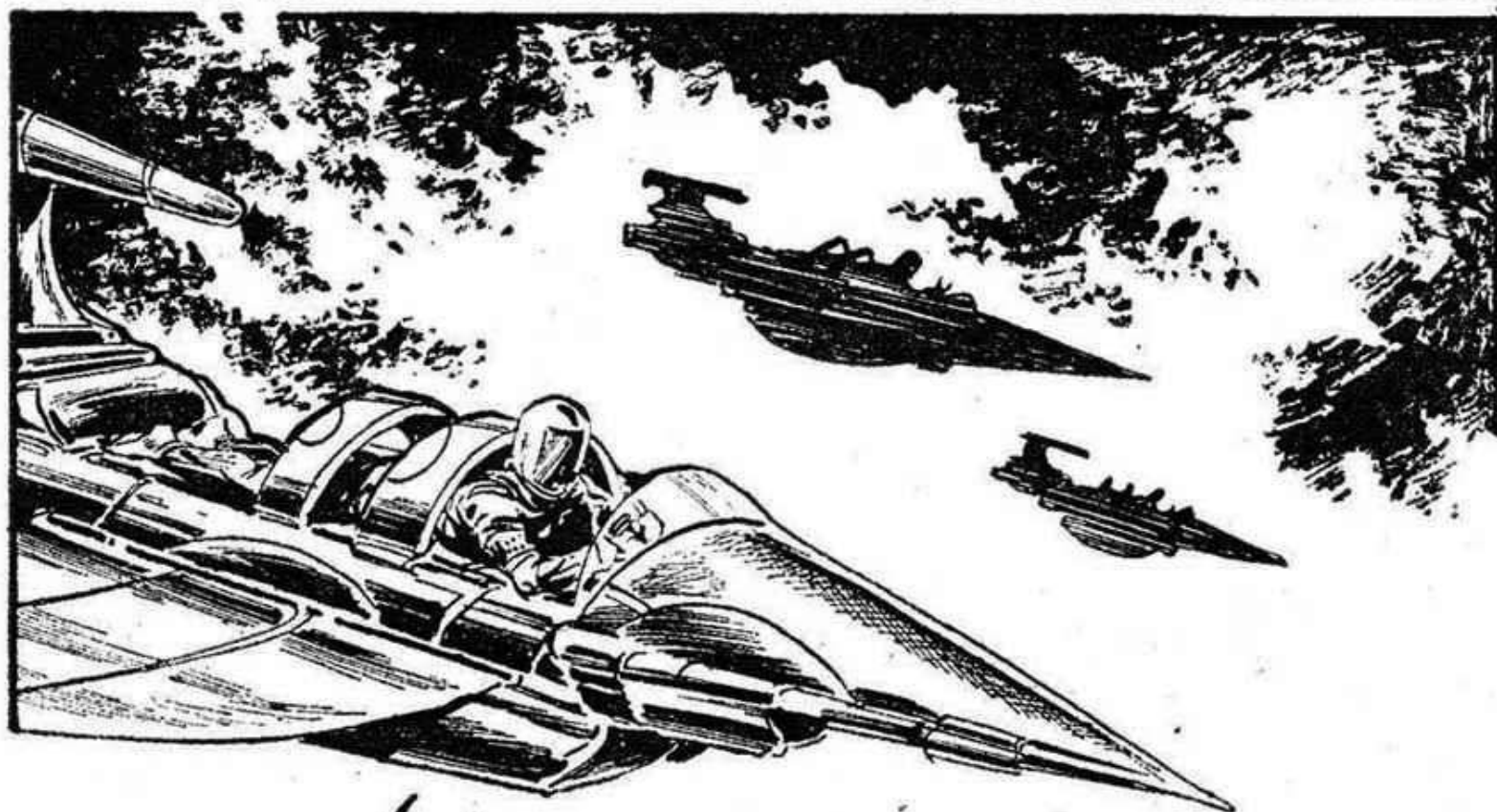
HOW ARE WE GETTING DOWN?





BY SPACE-BUG. I HOPE YOU TWO  
HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN HOW TO  
USE THEM?

NOT A CHANCE.



WE RENDEVOUS AT BASE  
5L JUST NORTH OF DURBAN.

THE DEFENCE COMMAND BUILDING HADN'T CHANGED IN THE TEN LAPTONES SINCE ZENOS HAD BEEN IN EXILE.



SHORTLY AFTER TOUCHING DOWN.

I THINK JO IS INTRODUCING HIMSELF TO THE GUARDS AT THE MOMENT.



I DON'T THINK THEY WERE EXPECTING US ZENOS.






HELLO, COMMANDER WATTS. I NEED SOME INFORMATION BUT I DON'T WANT IT SENT OVER THE VIDLINK.

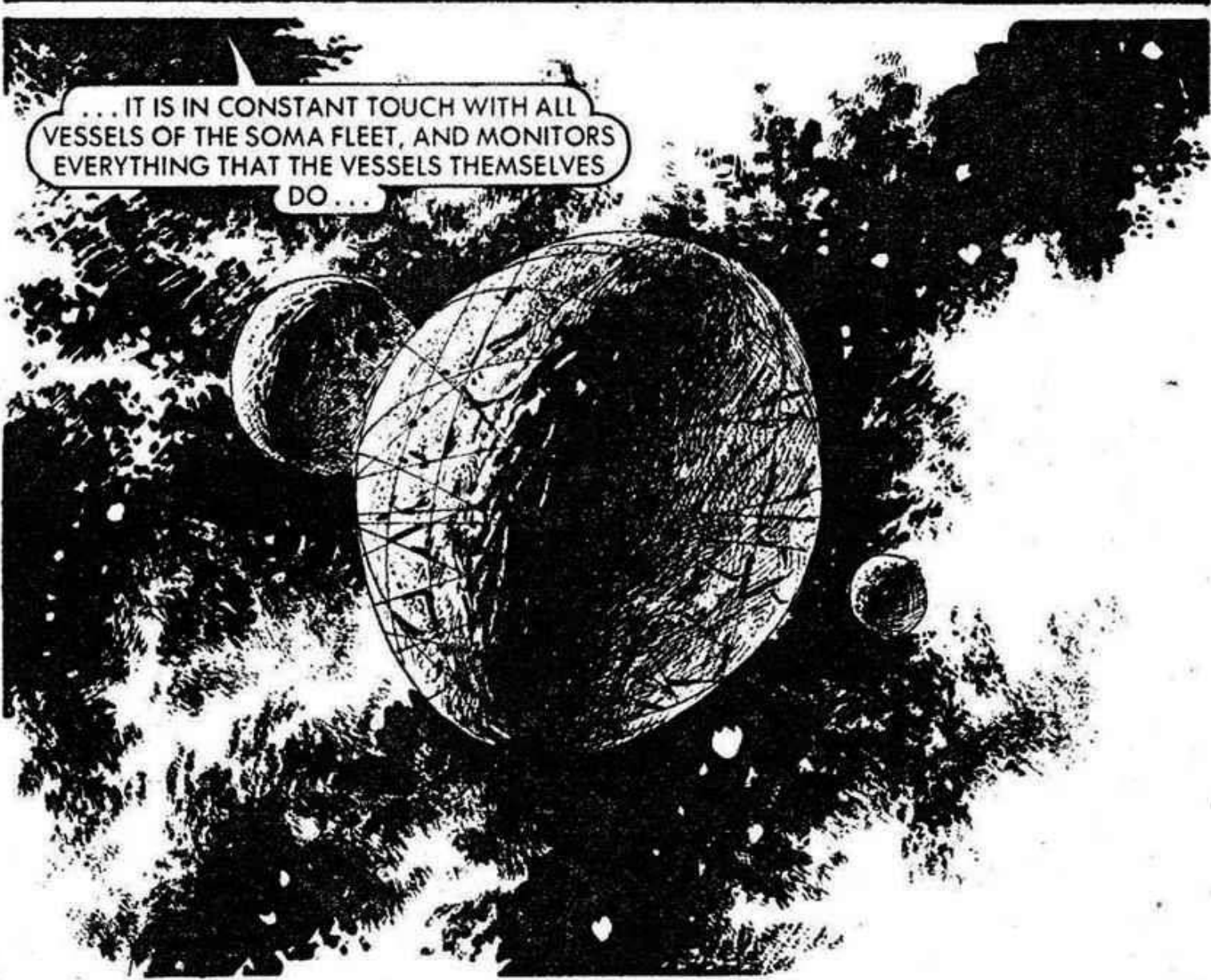


ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP ...


WE WERE ATTACKED BY THE SOMA OUT THERE. I NEED TO KNOW HOW THEY GOT HELP SO QUICKLY AND HOW THEY MANAGE SUCH EFFICIENT OBSERVATION.




AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THERE IS A HUGE  
ELECTRONIC BRAIN SOMEWHERE BENEATH THE  
PLANET SOMA...



... IT IS IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH ALL  
VESSELS OF THE SOMA FLEET, AND MONITORS  
EVERYTHING THAT THE VESSELS THEMSELVES  
DO...

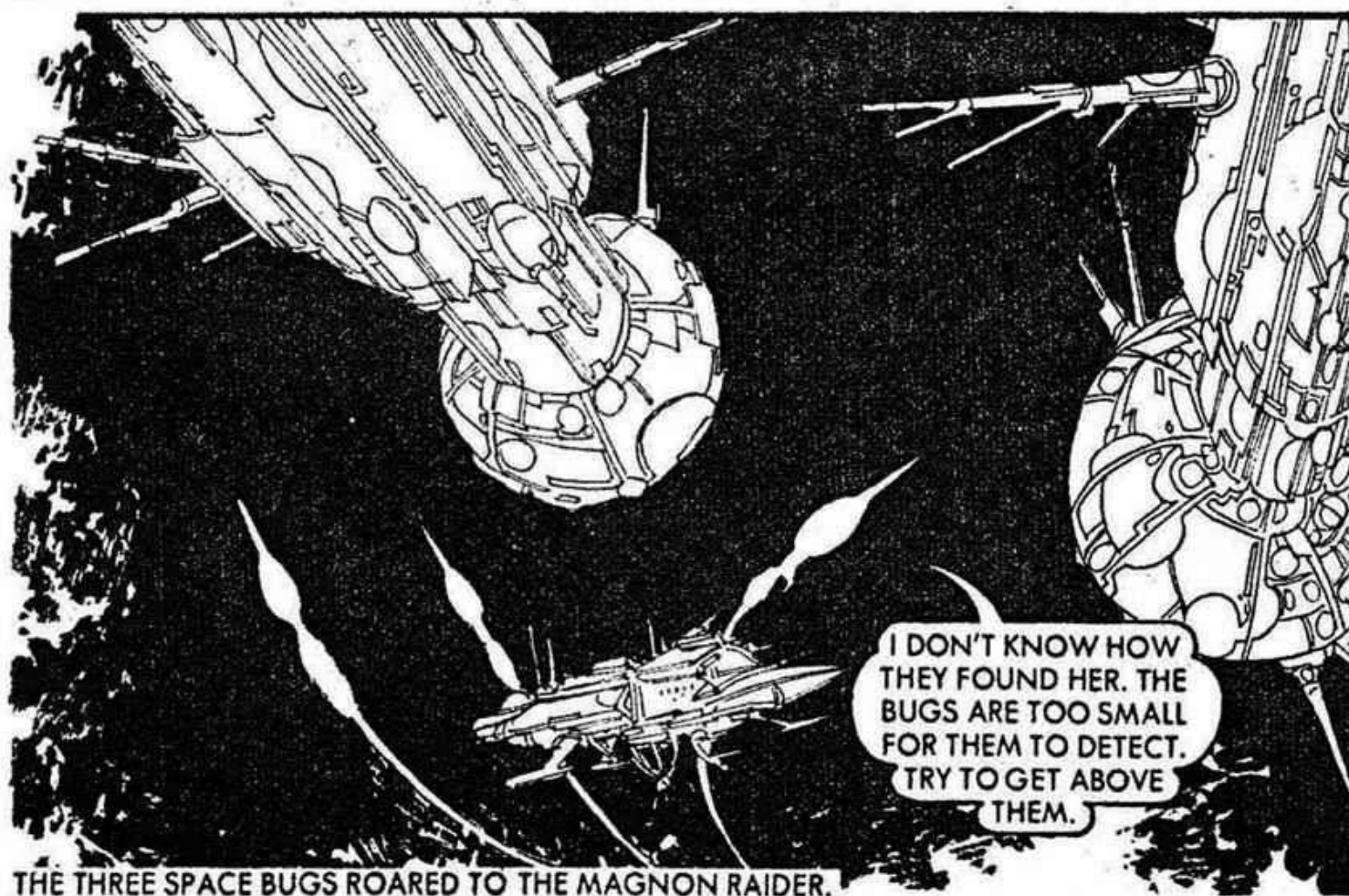


... MUCH MORE SOPHISTICATED  
THAN ANYTHING WE'VE GOT. SOME  
SAY IT CONTROLS THE SOMA  
THEMSELVES.



DO WE HAVE A DEFINITE  
LOCATION FOR THIS BRAIN  
ON SOMA?







RUN FOR COVER BEHIND  
THE MAGNON RAIDER.  
COMPUTER, ALL  
GUNS—HIT THAT  
WARSHIP...

THE FIRE FROM THE SCOUT CRAFTS' MEGACANNON  
SEVERELY DAMAGED THE SOMA WARSHIP.





THAT TAKES CARE OF THAT.

THE THREE DOCKED SAFELY IN THE MAGNON RAIDER.

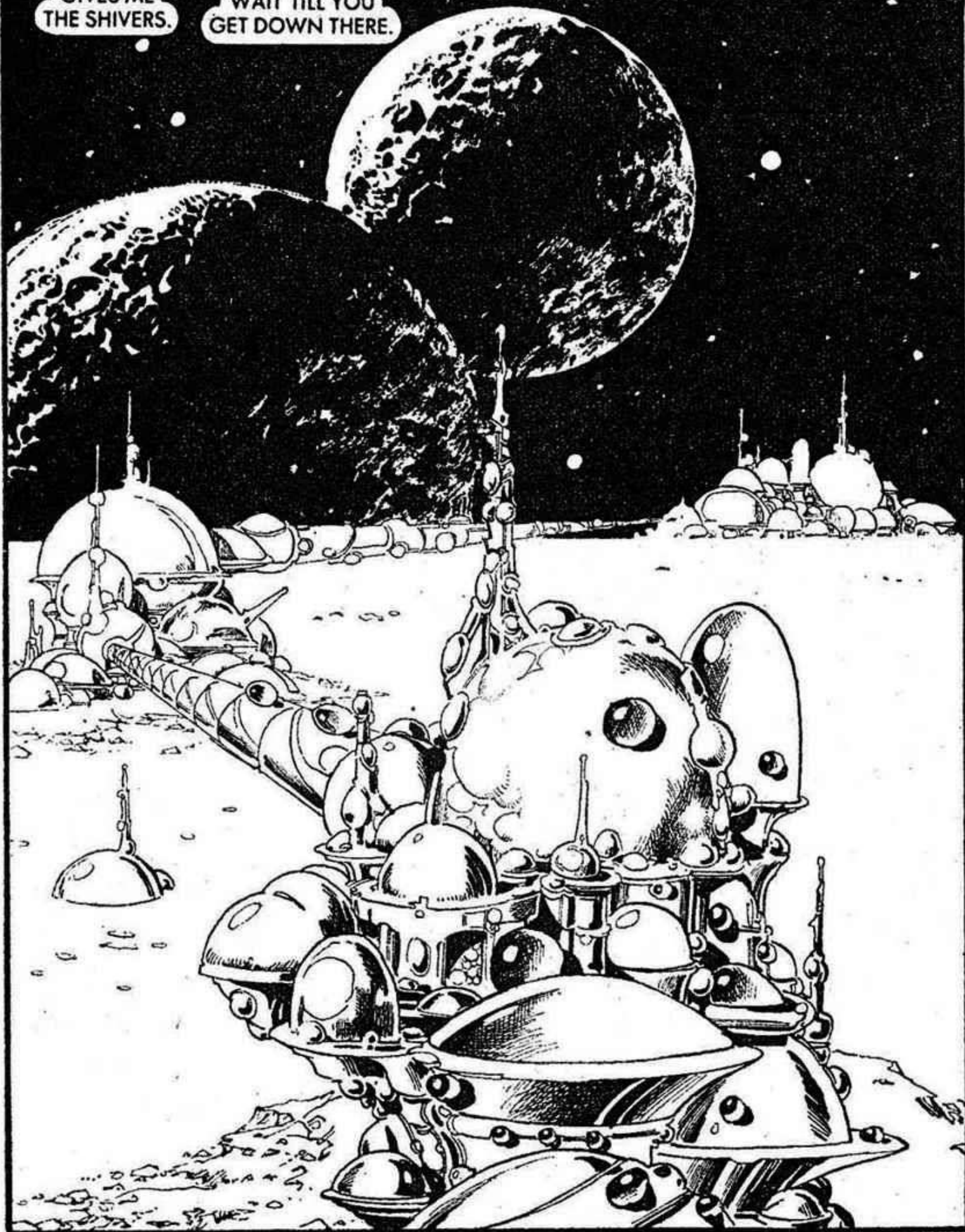
SOMA IS ABOUT A LAPTONE AWAY IN A CONVENTIONAL CRAFT, BUT WE HAVE UP TO LIGHT FACTOR THREE. IT WON'T TAKE US LONG TO GET THERE.

NOT VERY MUCH LATER.

EVEN THEIR PLANET LOOKS SINISTER.

GIVES ME  
THE SHIVERS.

WAIT TILL YOU  
GET DOWN THERE.





COMPUTER! I NEED THE MOST LIKELY  
LOCATION FOR A MASSIVE ELECTRON  
SCAN FOR SIGNALS. THERE  
SHOULD BE PLENTY.



MULTI READINGS. SIGNALS EMITTING FROM ALL POINTS OF  
THE SURFACE. TRANSMISSION MUST BE FROM WITHIN. MOST  
LIKELY IMMEDIATELY BELOW THE MAIN CITY OF AMOS.

ZENOS FOCUSED THE NEUTRON TELESCOPE ON THE CITY OF AMOS.

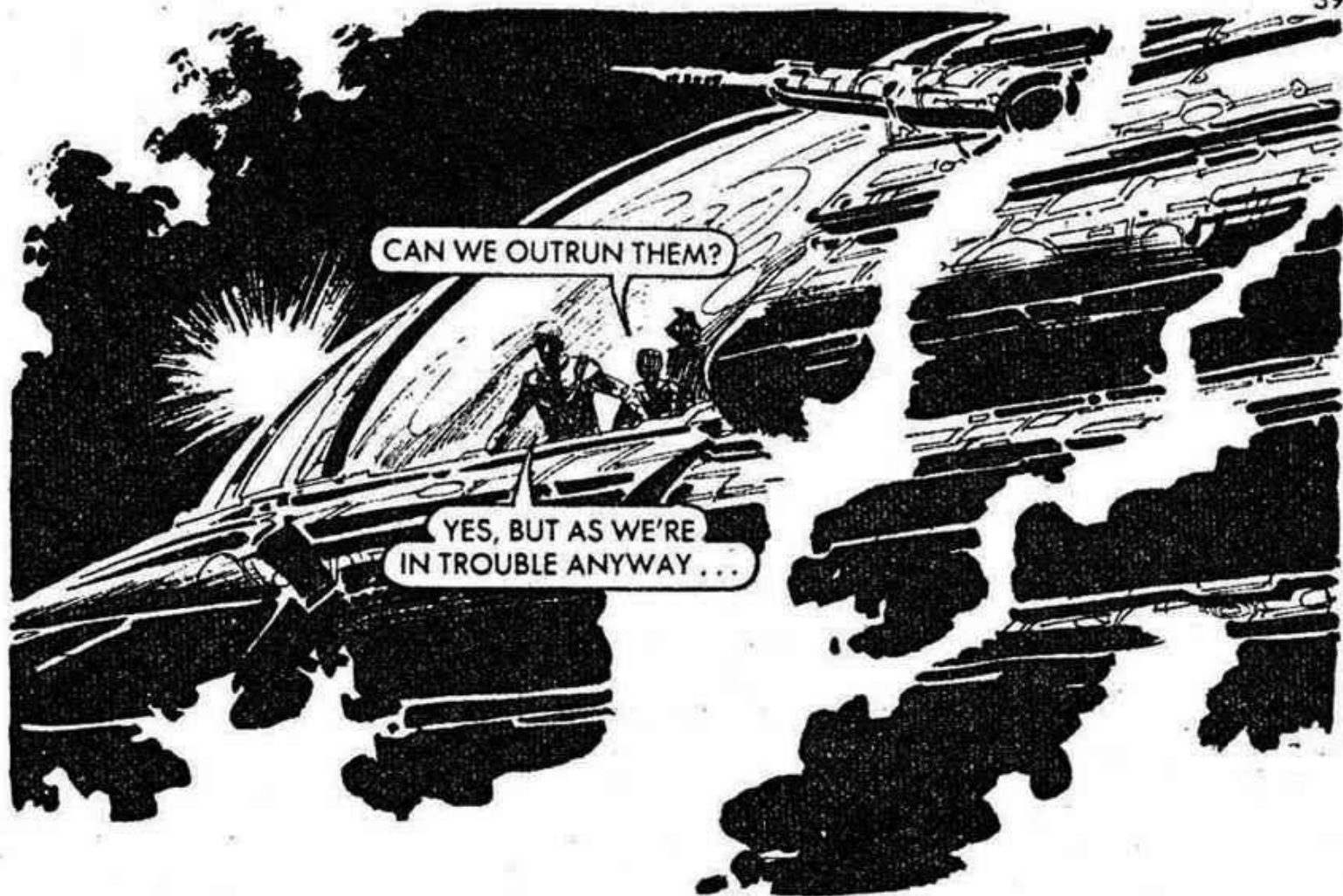
I WONDER WHAT WOULD  
HAPPEN IF WE BURST THOSE  
BUBBLES?

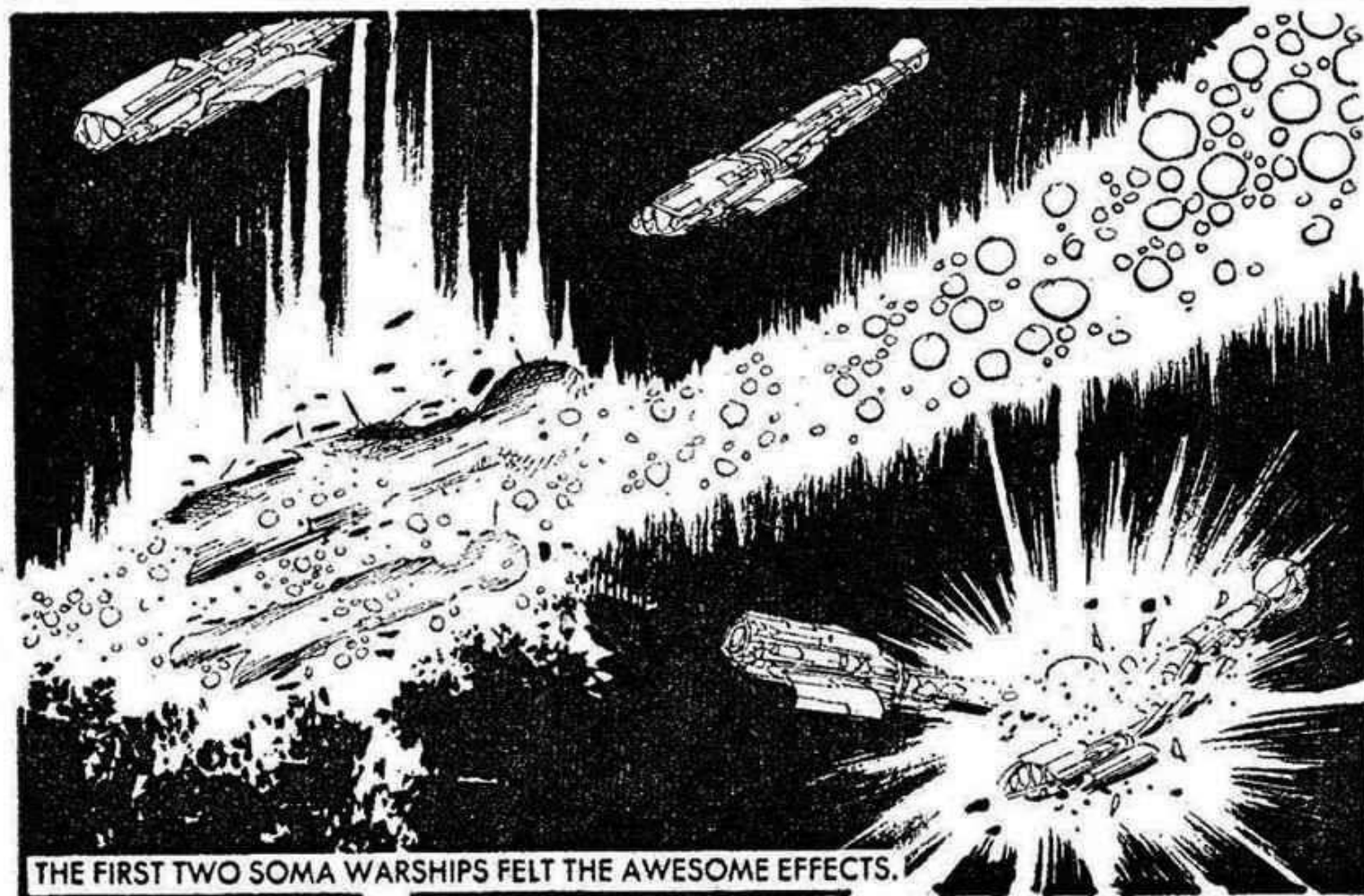
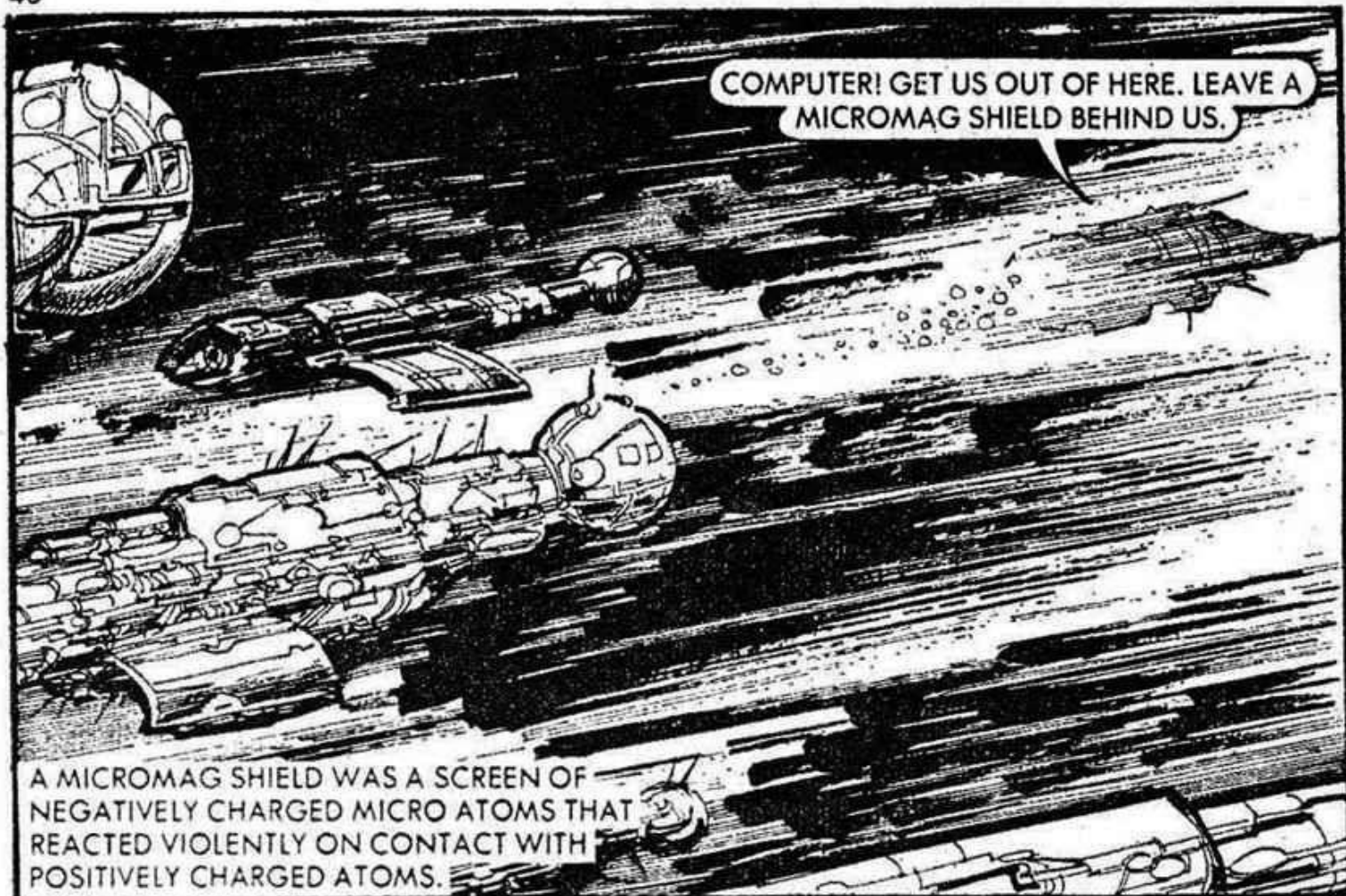
WE'D HAVE THE WHOLE  
FLEET AFTER US.



DANGER! DANGER! VESSELS, SECTOR 19 AND  
CLOSING. CAN DETECT EXTERNAL SCANNING.



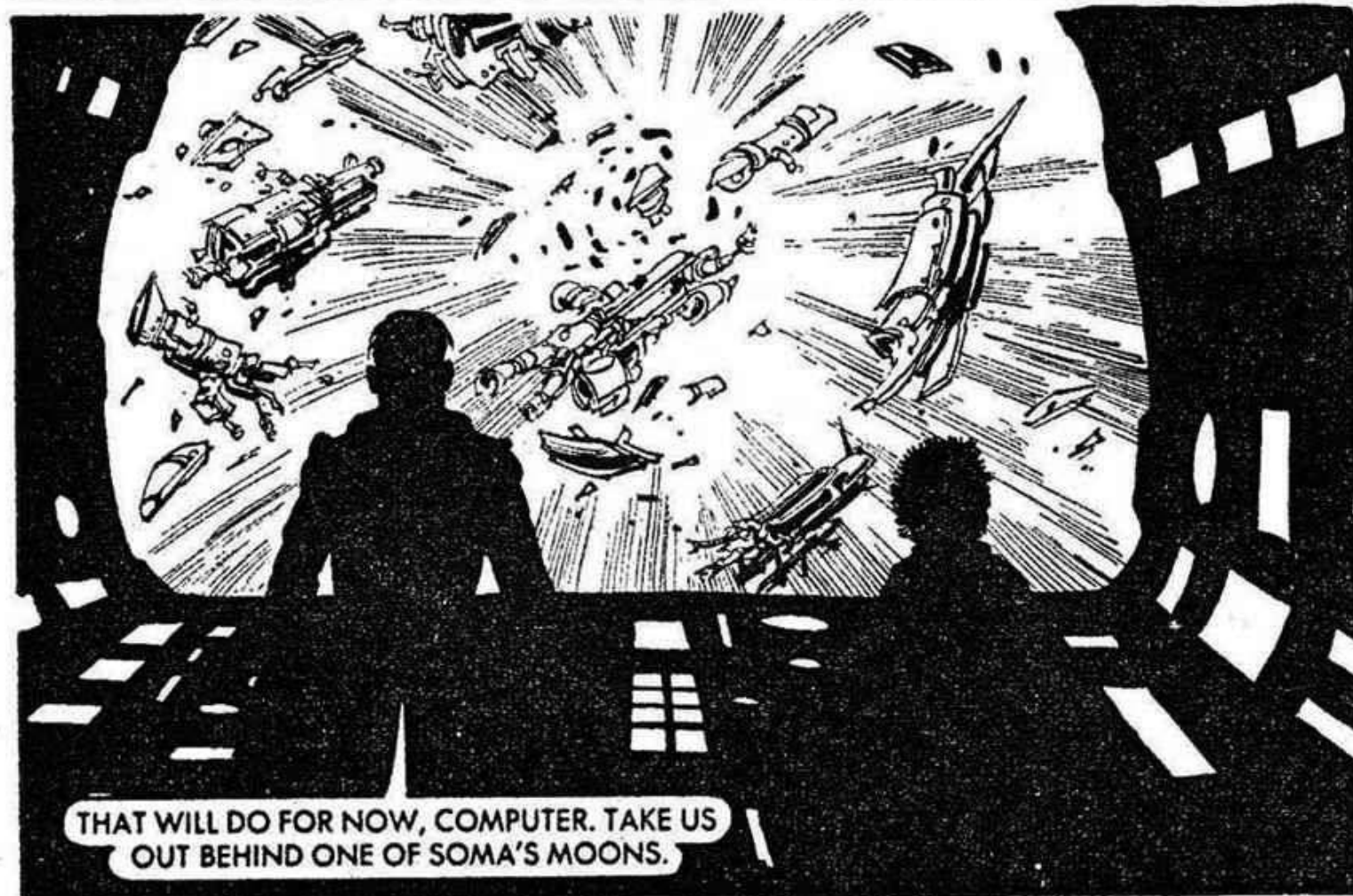








THE MAGNON RAIDER TURNED  
AND RAINED FIRE AND  
DESTRUCTION ON THE SOMA  
FLEET.



THAT WILL DO FOR NOW, COMPUTER. TAKE US  
OUT BEHIND ONE OF SOMA'S MOONS.



AS THE MOON SLOWLY ORBITED, THE COMPUTER SCANNED EVERY INCH OF SOMA'S SURFACE.

IT'LL BE DARK DOWN THERE SOON. THE  
PEOPLE OF SOMA DISLIKE THE DARK—  
WE'LL GO DOWN THEN.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, JO?

HE SENSES DANGER.



HIS INSTINCT WARNS HIM  
OF DANGER, BUT HE CAN'T  
FIGURE OUT WHAT.



WE MAY BE GONE FOR SOME TIME.  
I'M LEAVING THE WEAPONRY ON  
STAND-BY. IF ANYTHING  
APPROACHES THE MAGNON RAIDER  
OTHER THAN OURSELVES, DESTROY  
IT, COMPUTER.



WE'LL PUT DOWN AMONGST THOSE HILLS  
AND HAVE A LOOK ROUND FROM THERE.



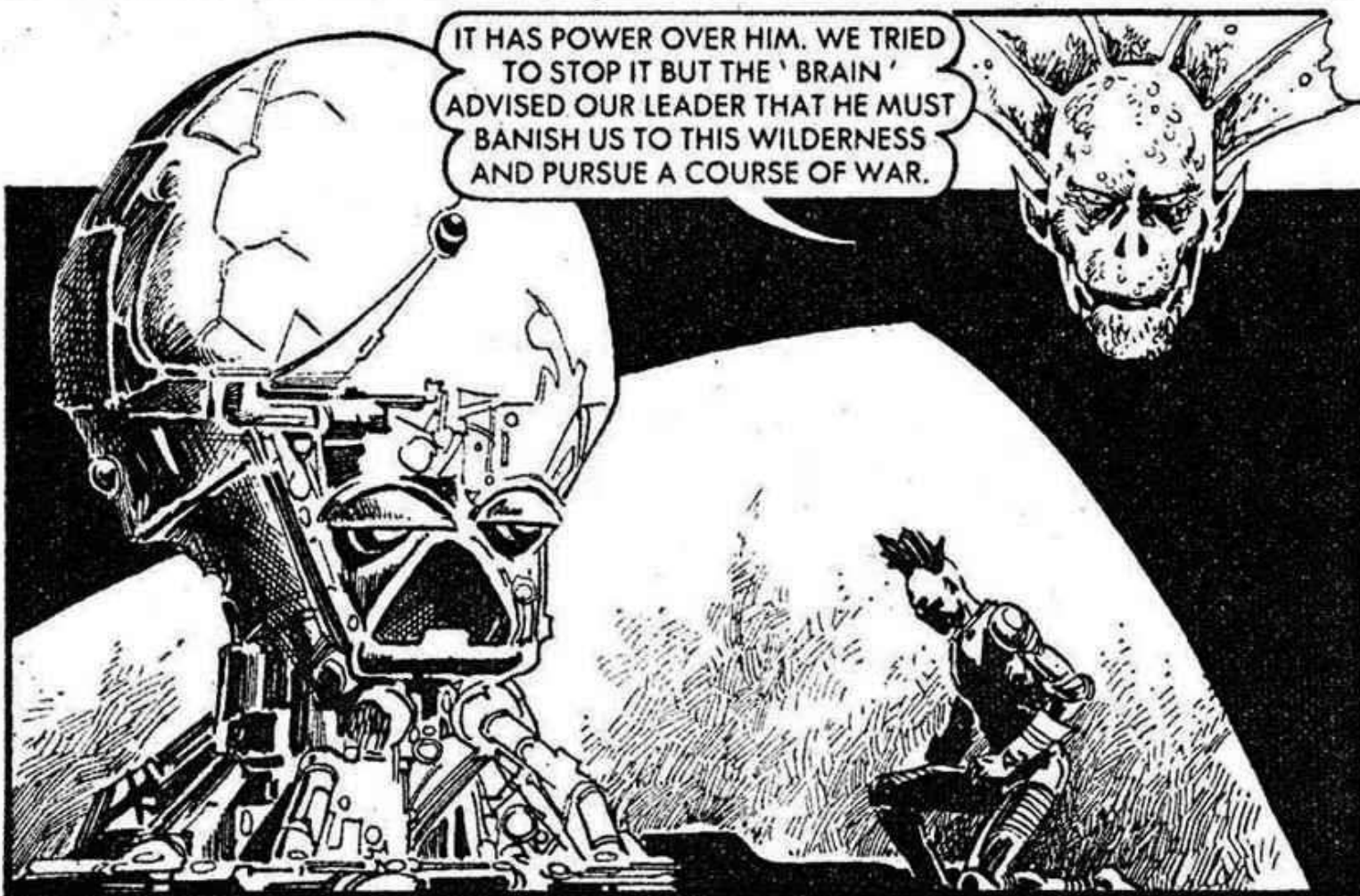


AS THEY PREPARED TO LAND,  
UNSEEN EYES WERE  
WATCHING THEM.









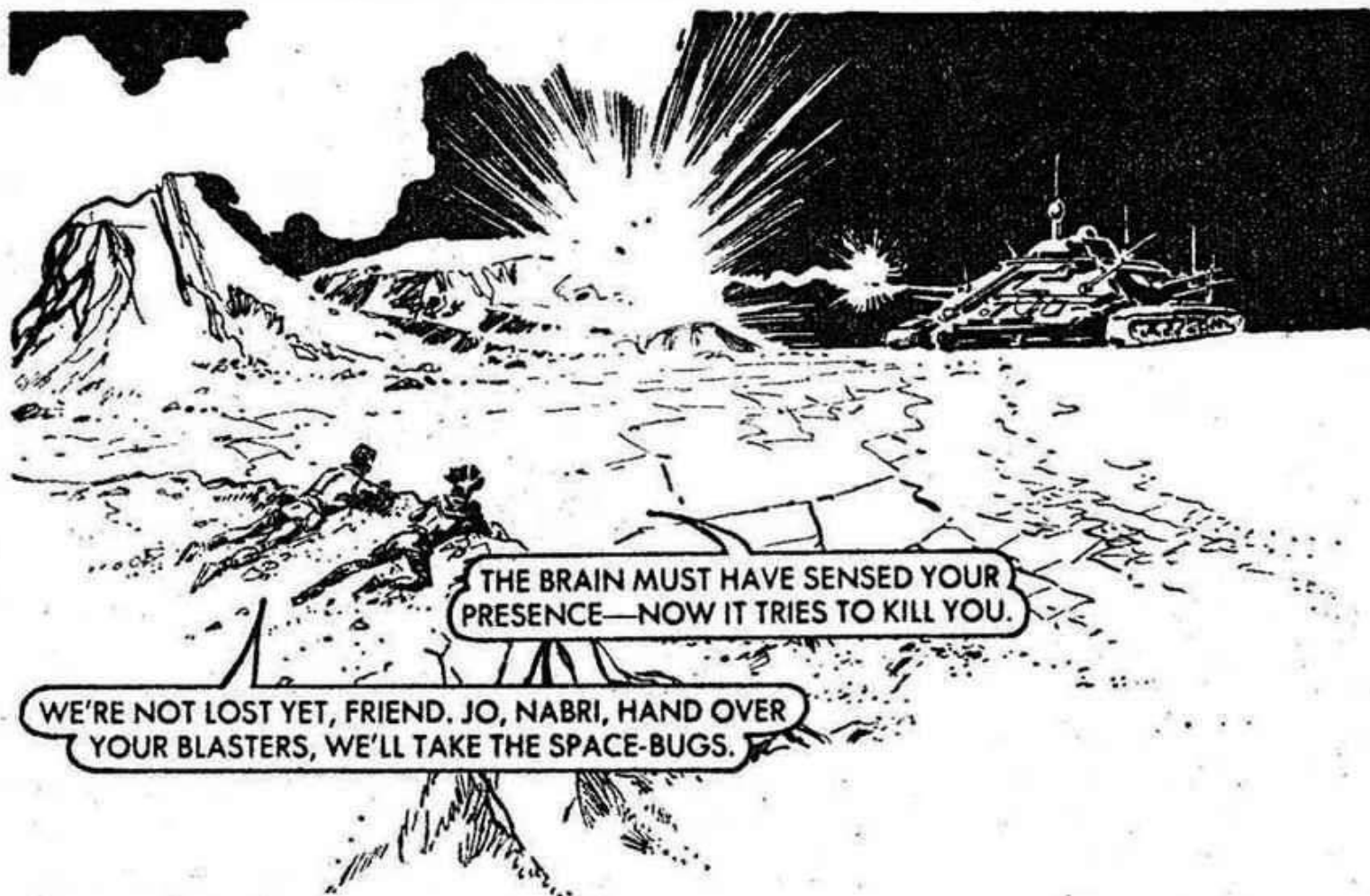






WHAT'S THAT?

IT IS A MACHINE OF  
DEATH—A VENGETANK.

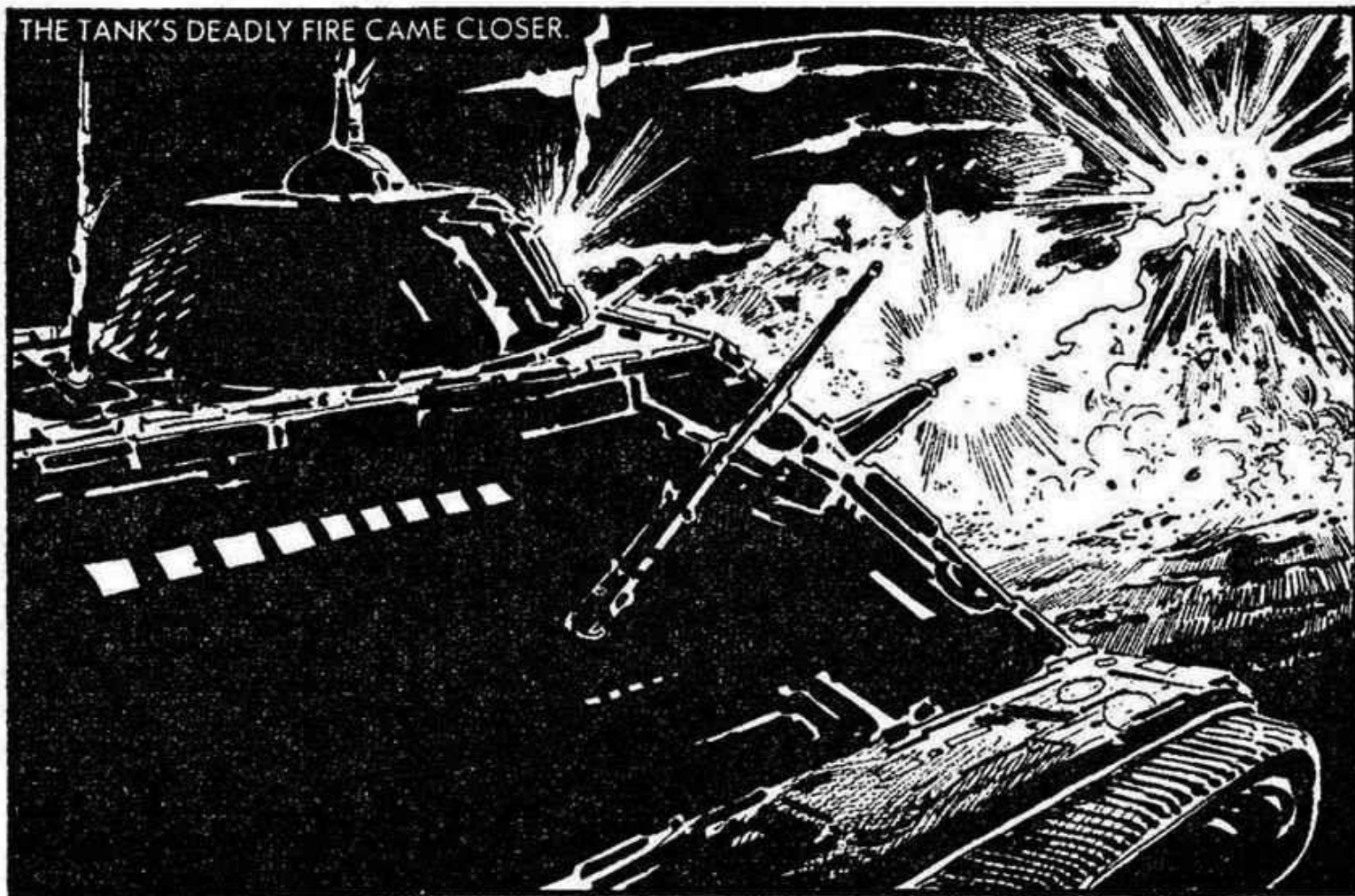


THE BRAIN MUST HAVE SENSED YOUR  
PRESENCE—NOW IT TRIES TO KILL YOU.

WE'RE NOT LOST YET, FRIEND. JO, NABRI, HAND OVER  
YOUR BLASTERS, WE'LL TAKE THE SPACE-BUGS.

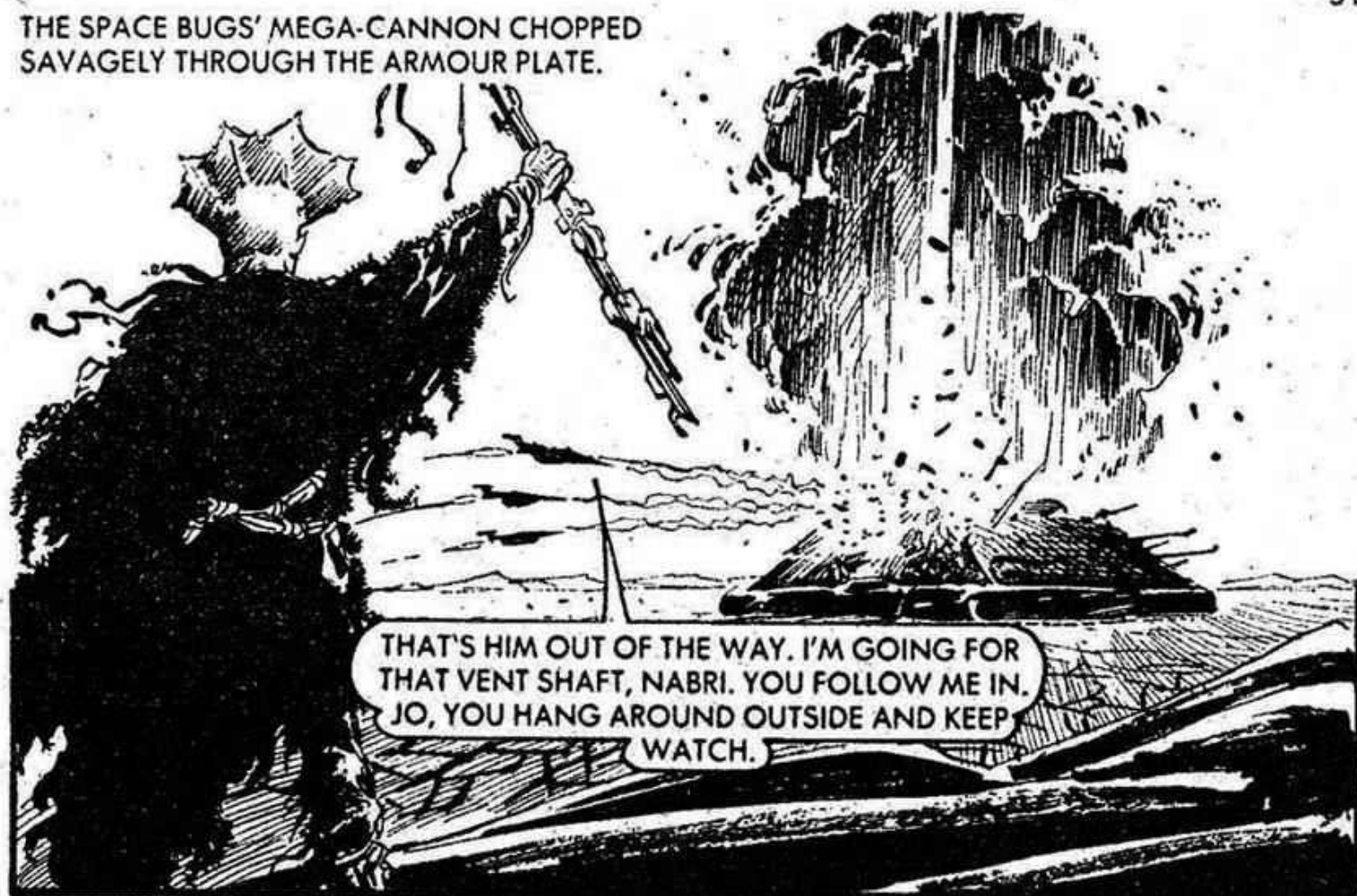


THE TANK'S DEADLY FIRE CAME CLOSER.

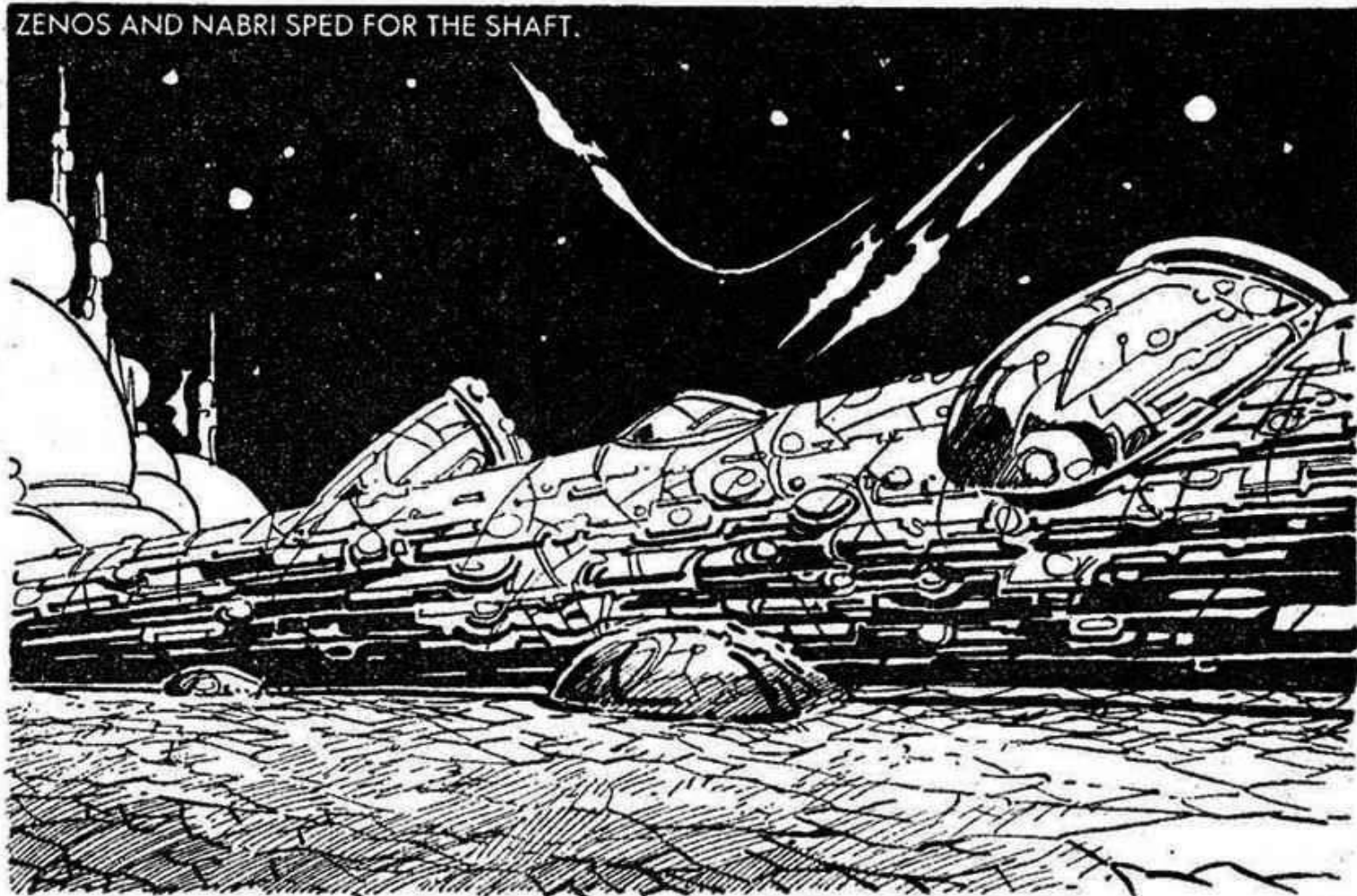




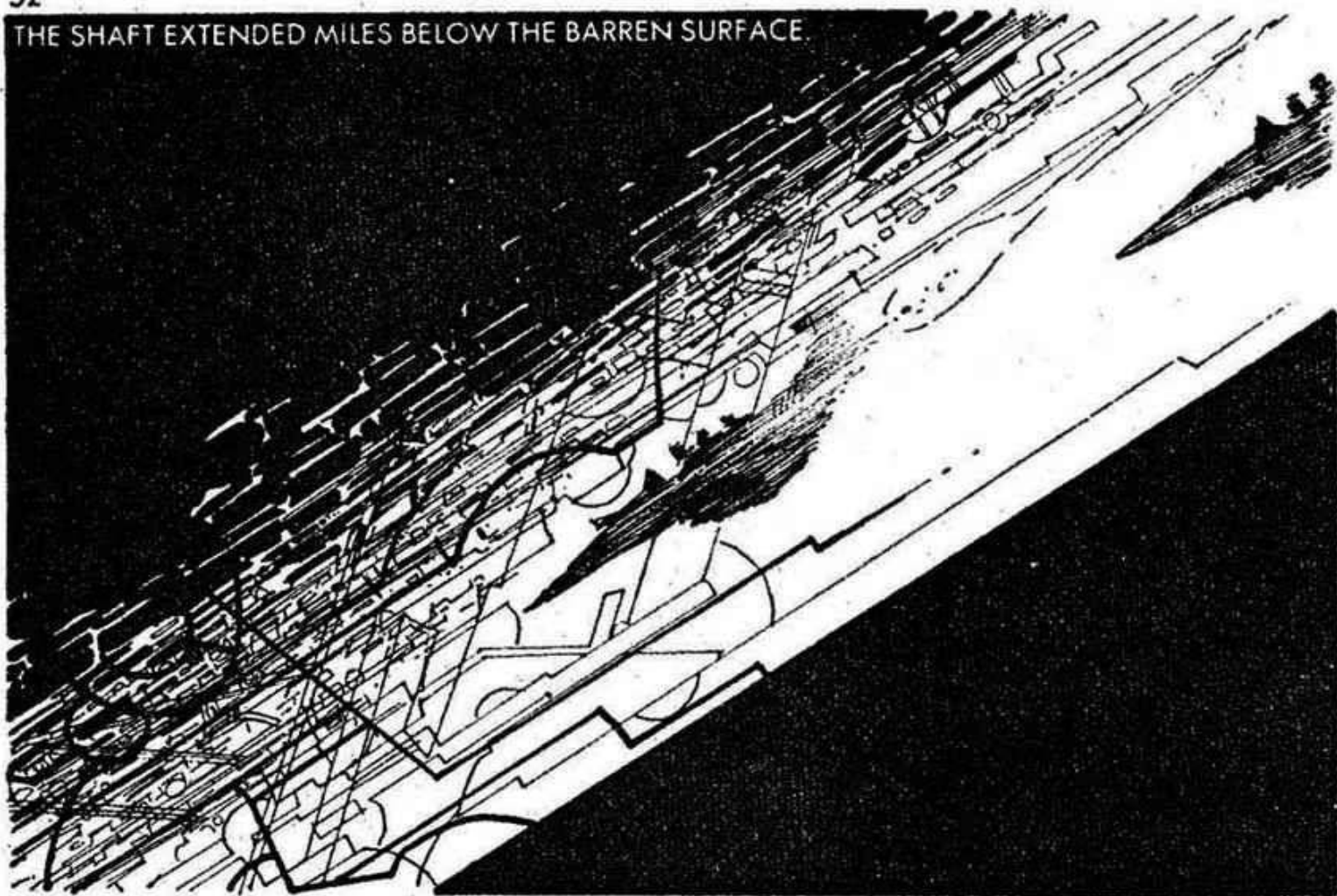
THE SPACE BUGS' MEGA-CANNON CHOPPED SAVAGELY THROUGH THE ARMOUR PLATE.



ZENOS AND NABRI SPED FOR THE SHAFT.



THE SHAFT EXTENDED MILES BELOW THE BARREN SURFACE.

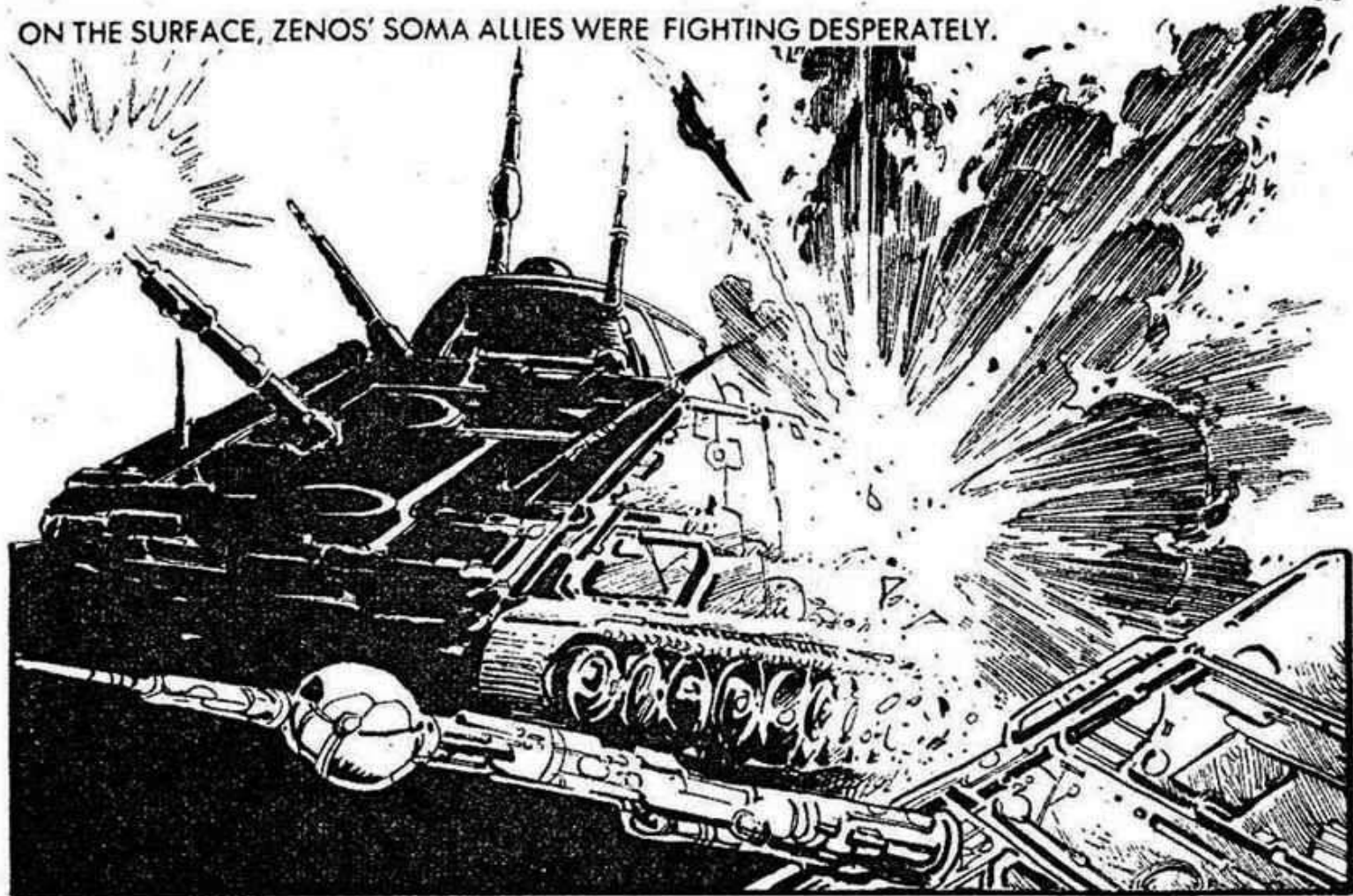


THERE'S THE  
END, NABRI.





ON THE SURFACE, ZENOS' SOMA ALLIES WERE FIGHTING DESPERATELY.



SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE.  
THERE'S NO BRAIN.

THERE ISN'T ENOUGH ROOM TO  
TURN ... WE'LL HAVE TO LAND.

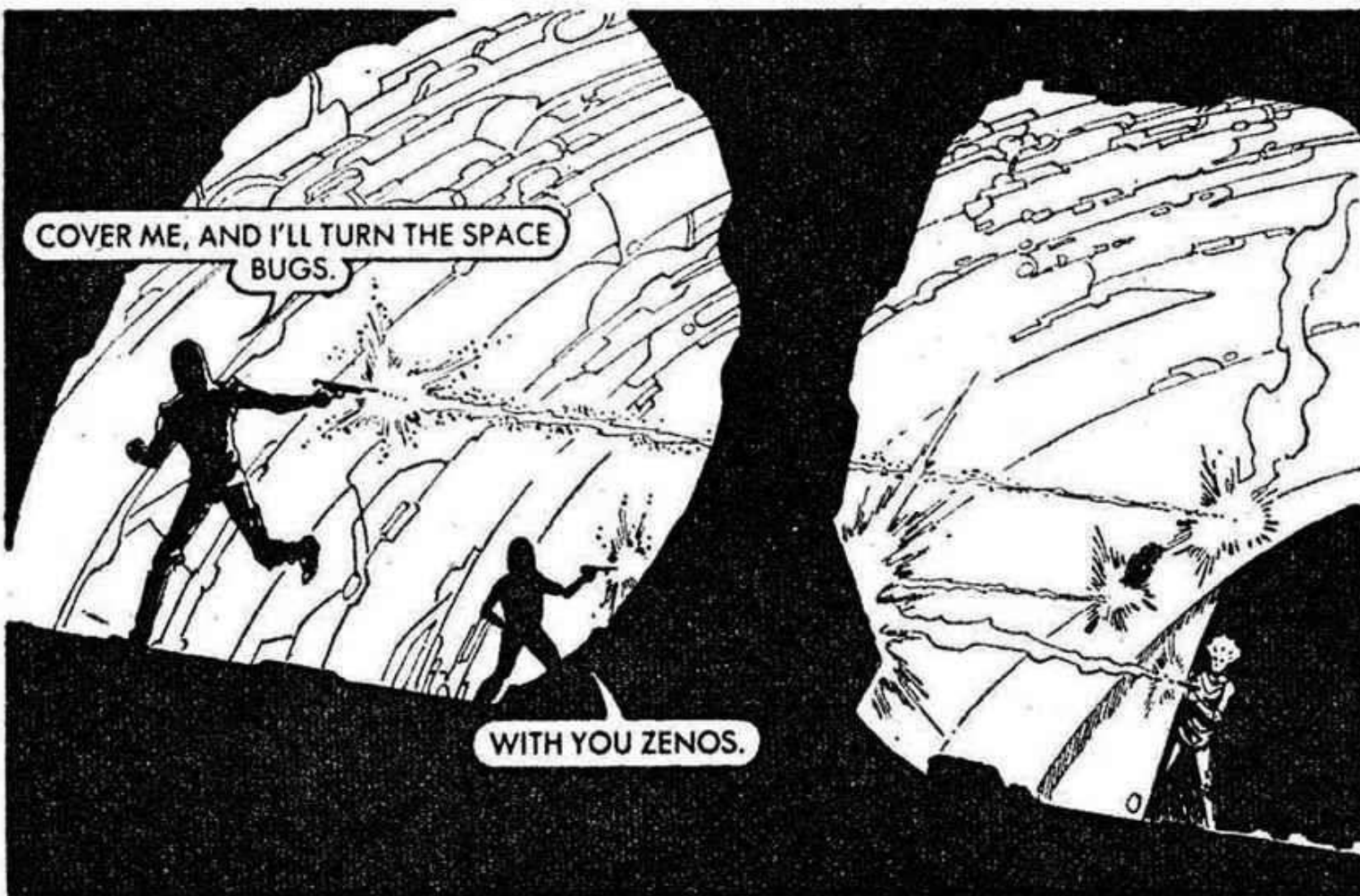


MORE SOMA. GRAB A BLASTER  
AND HOLD THEM OFF, NABRI.

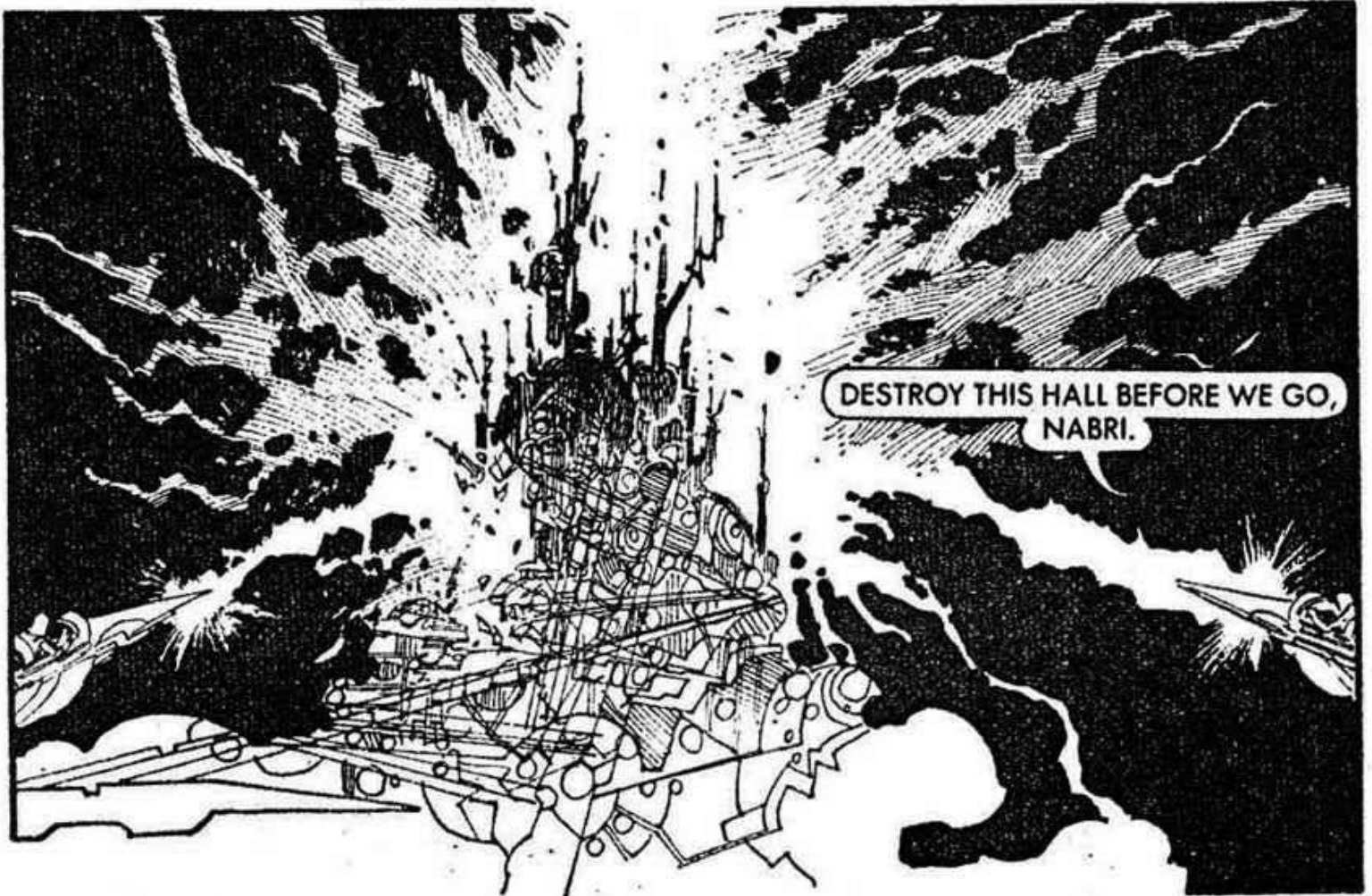
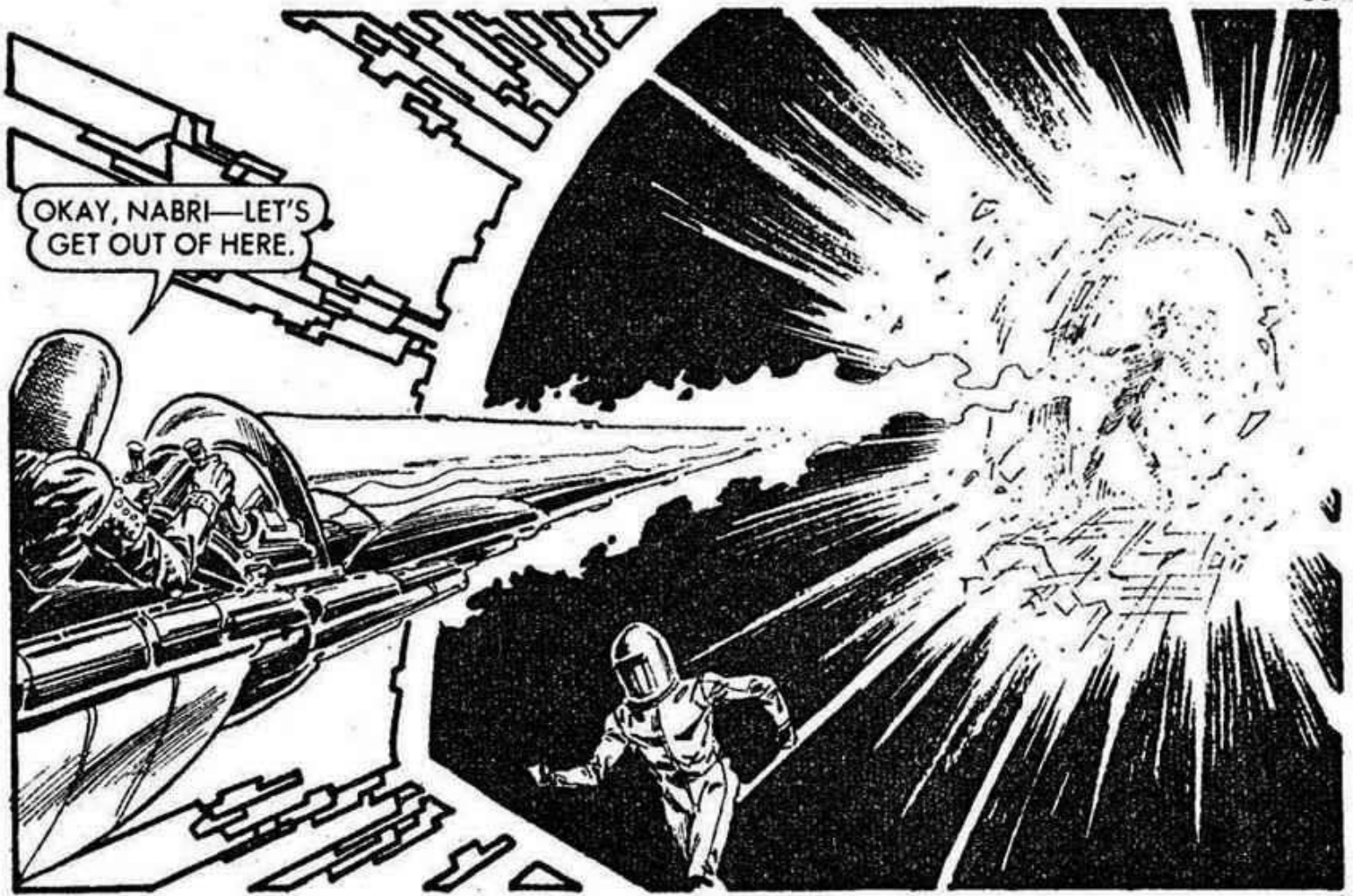


COVER ME, AND I'LL TURN THE SPACE  
BUGS.

WITH YOU ZENOS.

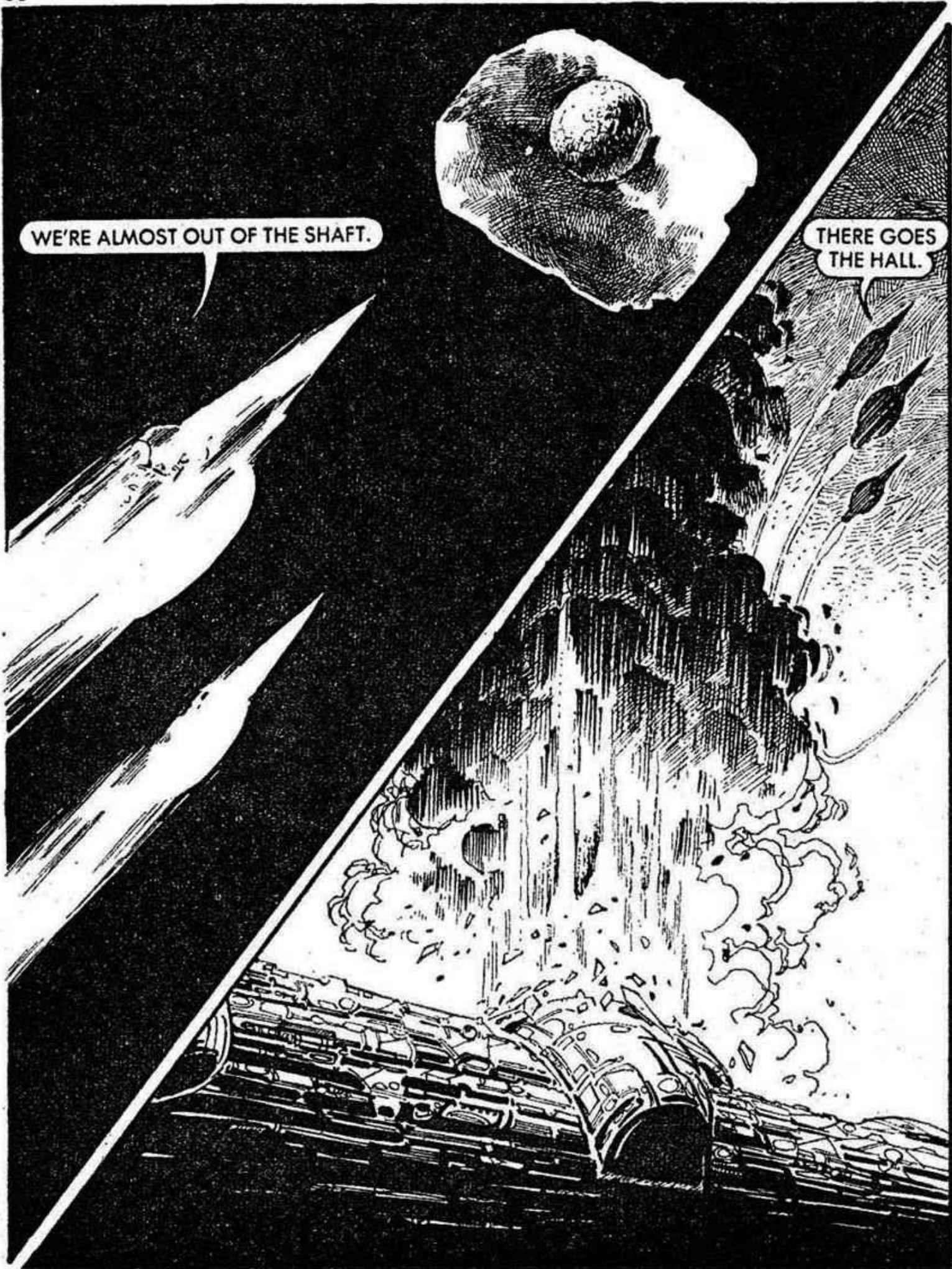






WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF THE SHAFT.

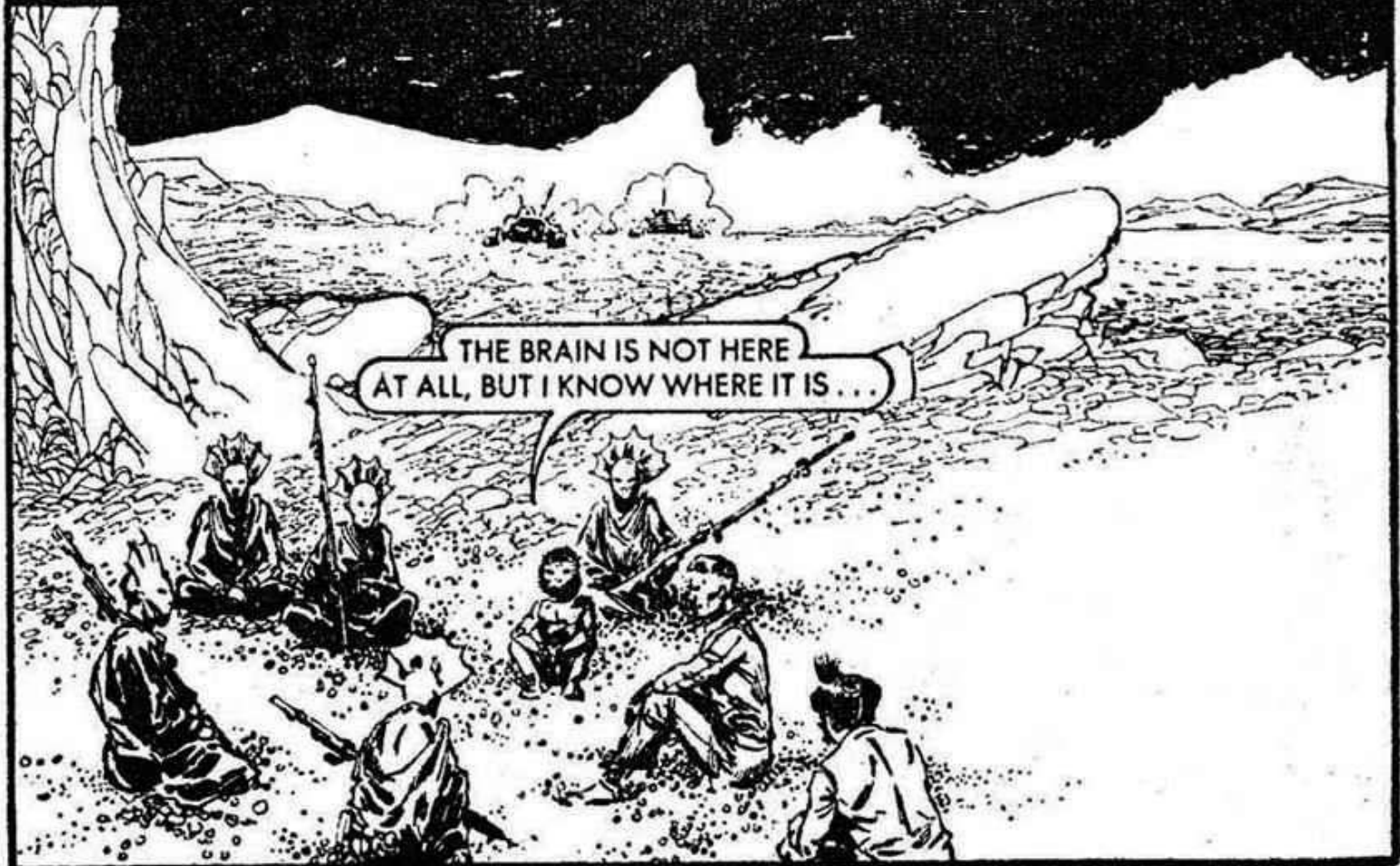
THERE GOES  
THE HALL.







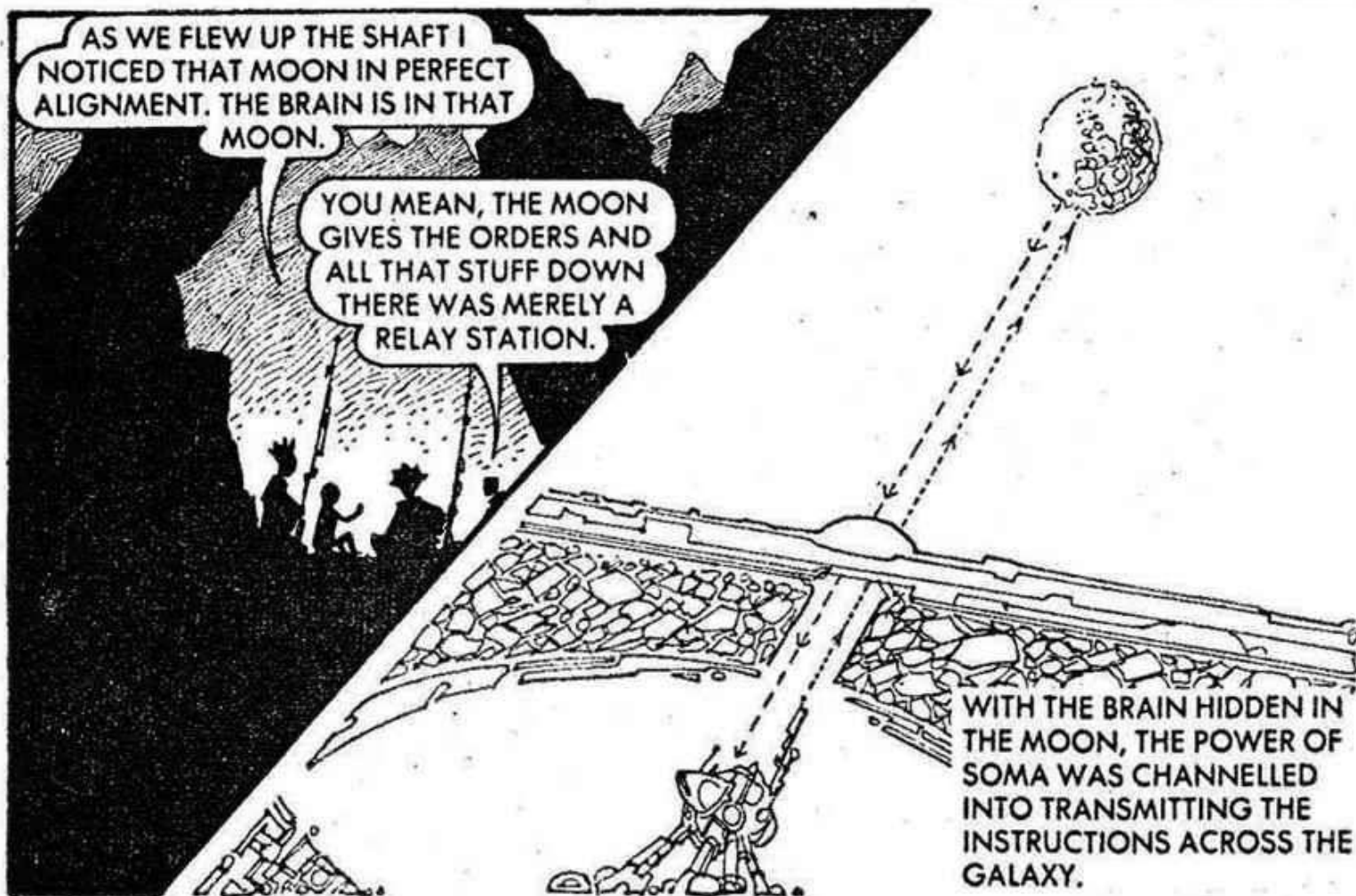
THE TRIO LANDED AND PUZZLED OVER THE MYSTERY OF THE BRAIN.





AS WE FLEW UP THE SHAFT I NOTICED THAT MOON IN PERFECT ALIGNMENT. THE BRAIN IS IN THAT MOON.

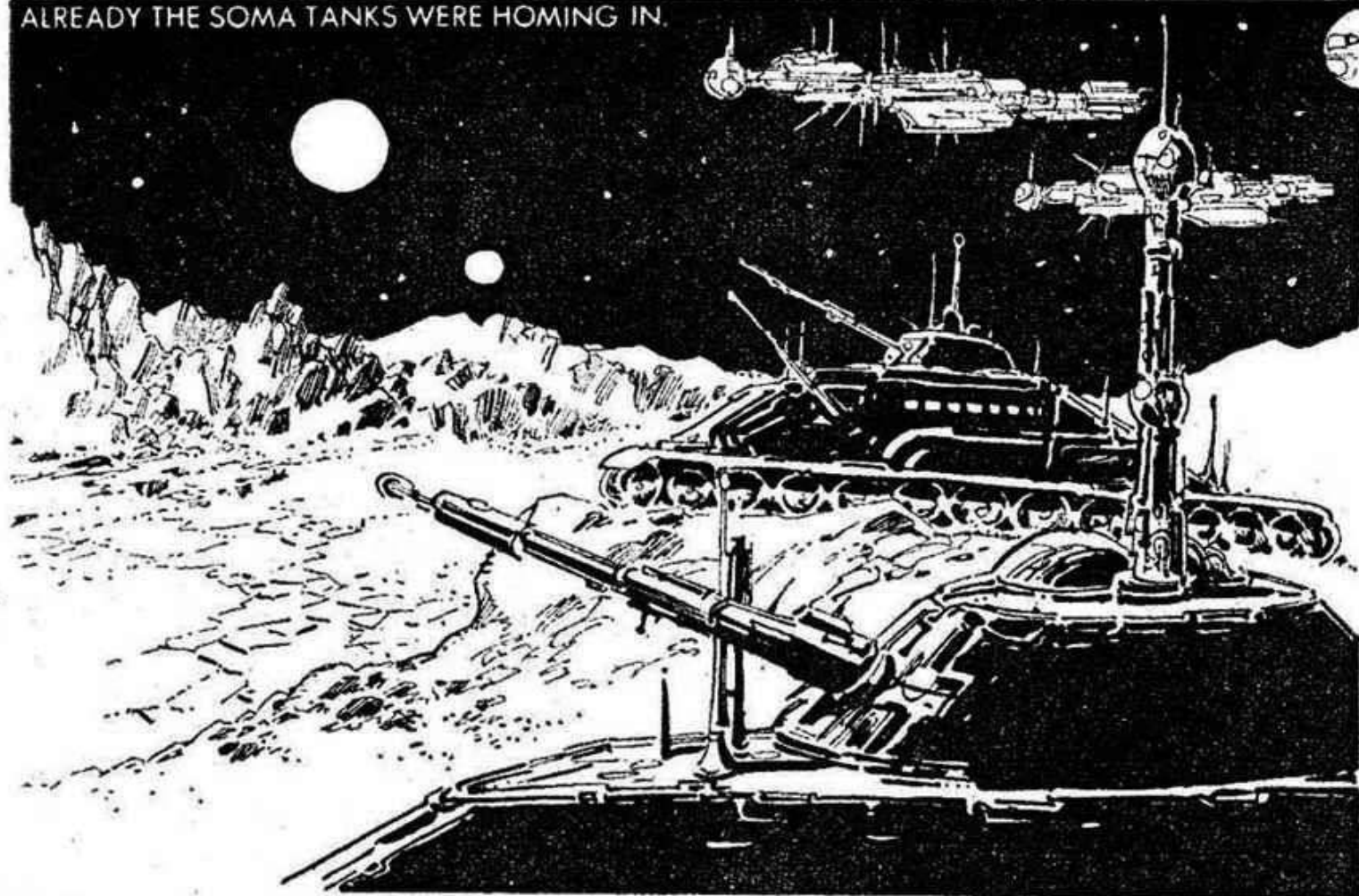
YOU MEAN, THE MOON GIVES THE ORDERS AND ALL THAT STUFF DOWN THERE WAS MERELY A RELAY STATION.



WITH THE BRAIN HIDDEN IN THE MOON, THE POWER OF SOMA WAS CHANNELLED INTO TRANSMITTING THE INSTRUCTIONS ACROSS THE GALAXY.



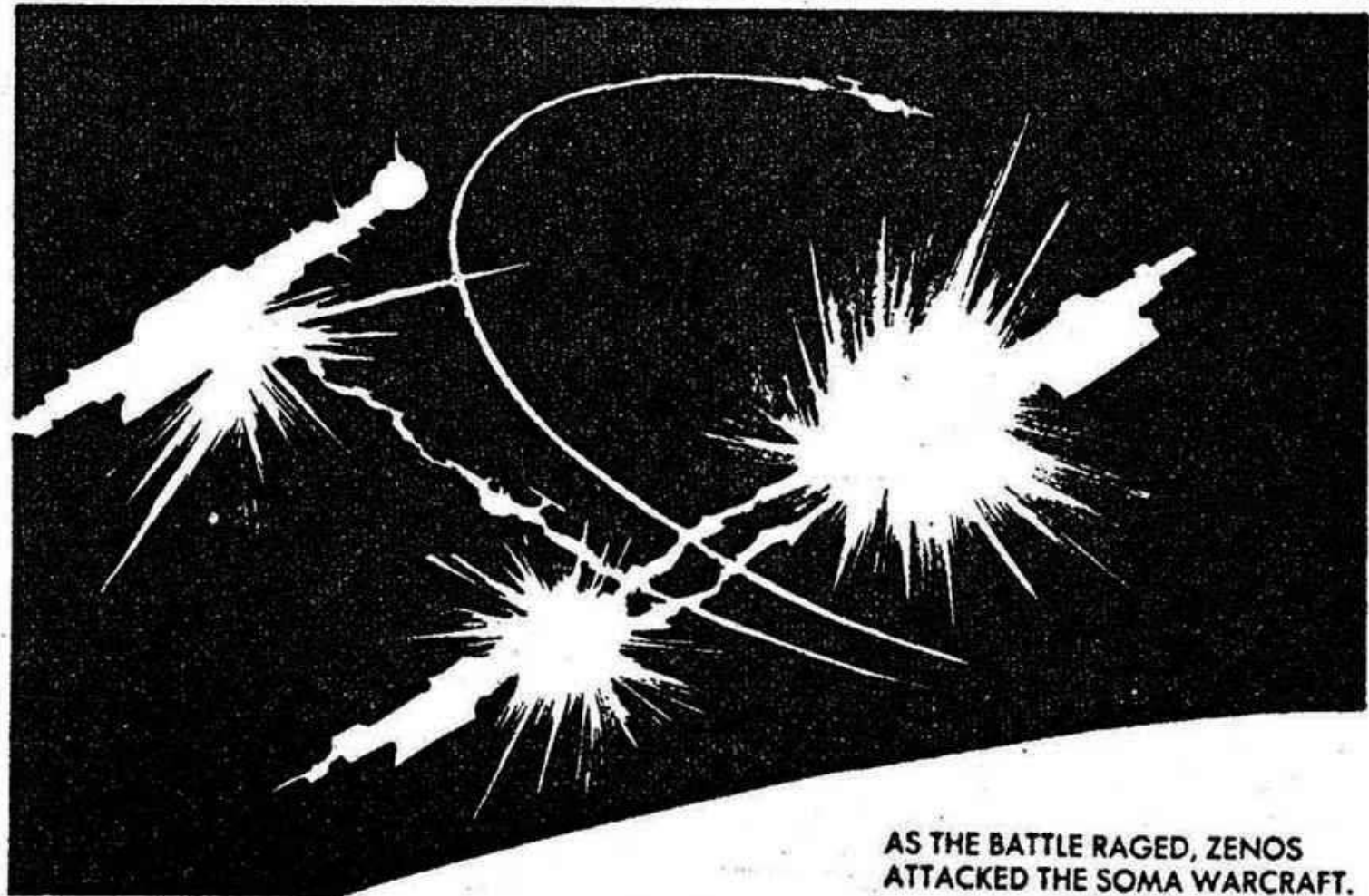
ALREADY THE SOMA TANKS WERE HOMING IN.



WHAT THE...?



ZENOS RACED FOR THE MAGNON RAIDER.



AS THE BATTLE RAGED, ZENOS  
ATTACKED THE SOMA WARCRRAFT.





JO AND NABRI TRIED TO HOLD THE TANKS OFF.

SUDDENLY.

DON'T WORRY  
NABRI, HERE I COME.



THE OPPOSITION WAS WIPED OUT IN AN INSTANT.



COMPUTER. ARE YOU  
GETTING ANYTHING?

NOTHING. LIFE FORMS  
STATUS ZERO.

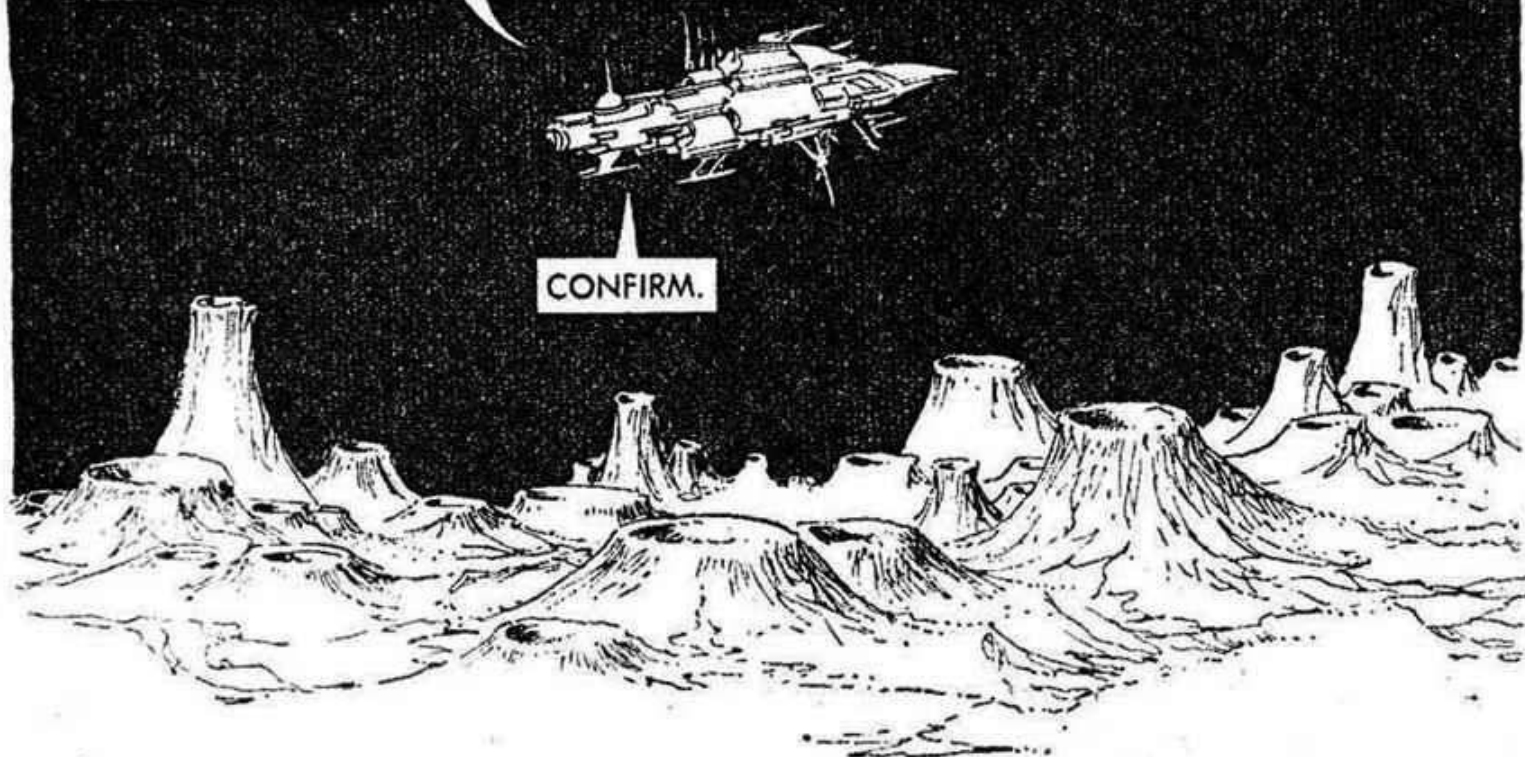
IF THERE IS ONLY A SINGLE SIGNAL, WE'D  
HAVE TO PASS VERY CLOSE TO IT TO  
'HEAR' IT.



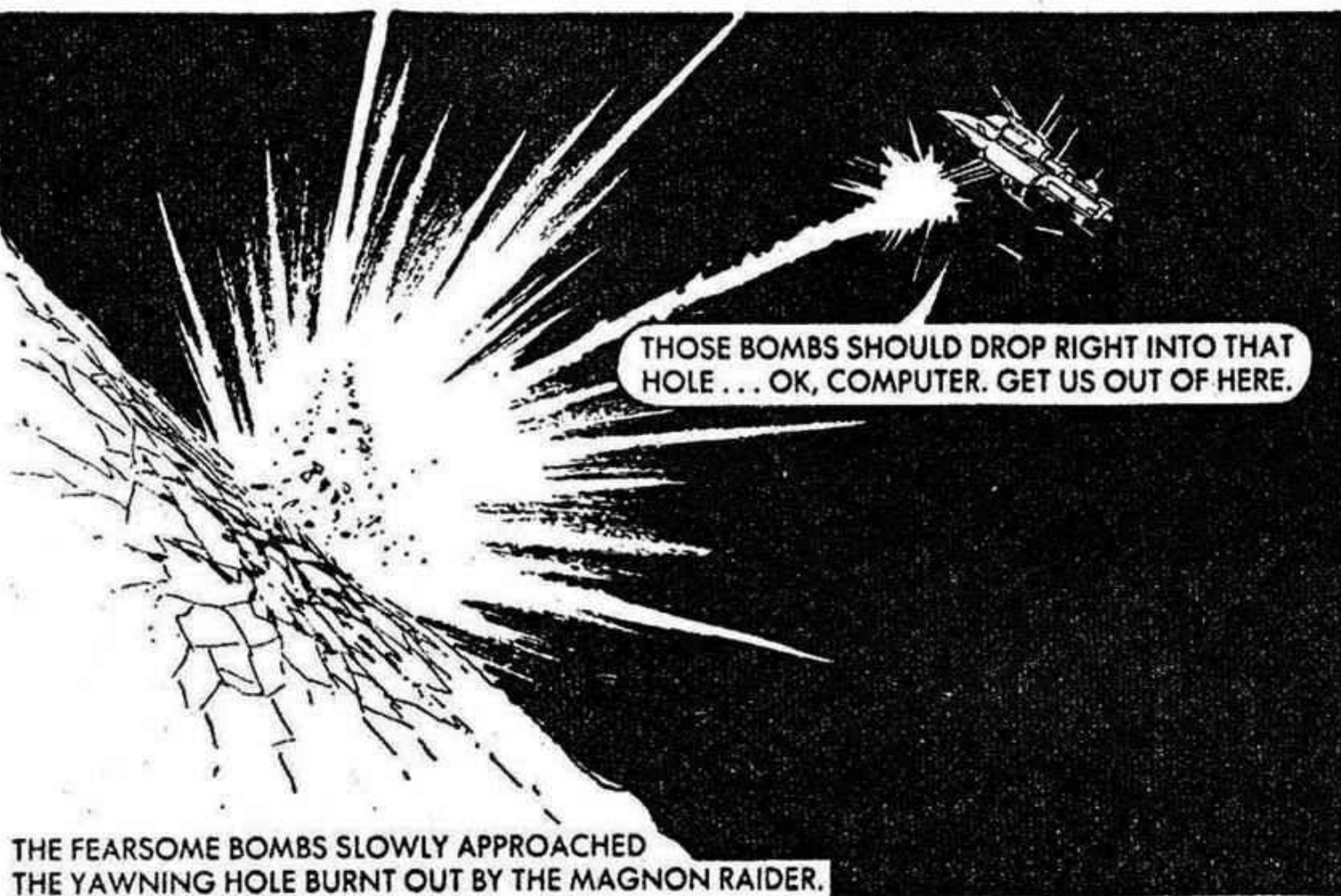


COMPUTER. I'M GOING TO MAKE A SWEEP. I WANT TWO NEUTRON BOMBS DROPPED AS WE PASS. BUT I WANT THEM TO GO IN SLOWLY. I'M GOING TO BLAST A HOLE IN THE SURFACE, FIRST.

CONFIRM.



THOSE BOMBS SHOULD DROP RIGHT INTO THAT HOLE... OK, COMPUTER. GET US OUT OF HERE.



THE FEARSOME BOMBS SLOWLY APPROACHED THE YAWNING HOLE BURNT OUT BY THE MAGNON RAIDER.

THE BOMBS EXPLODED CAUSING AN ENORMOUS EARTHQUAKE WHICH CRACKED THE OUTER CASING OF THE BRAIN.



THE FIRE FROM THE MAGNUM RAIDER  
POURED INTO THE CRACKING MOON,  
AND SPLIT IT ASSUNDER.

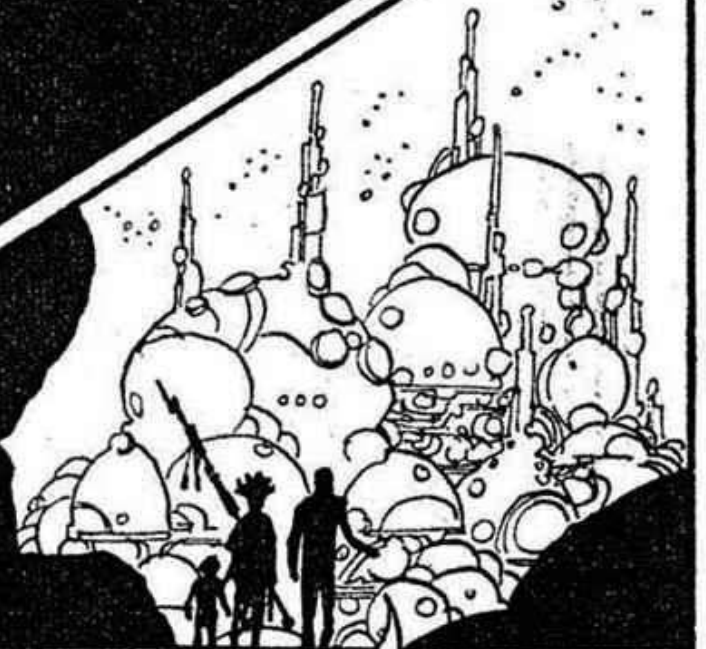


LATER, BACK ON SOMA.

I WOULD LIKE TO STAY BUT,  
I MUST RETURN TO MY HOME.



I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME WITH ME AS  
AN OFFICIAL PEACE MISSION. YOU ARE  
NOW THE LEADER HERE.



I WILL SEND A MESSAGE BACK TO EARTH  
SO THAT MY PEOPLE CAN MAKE THE  
PROPER ARRANGEMENTS.

ZENOS THE BANISHED RETURNED TO HIS NATIVE EARTH AFTER YEARS ALONE IN SPACE.

BACK HOME AGAIN—ON THE RIGHT  
SIDE OF THE LAW THIS TIME.

COUNCIL AWAITS  
HERO ZENOS  
SOMA FORCES  
DESTROYED!  
PEACE FOR



**DON'T MISS THIS MONTH'S  
OTHER ACTION-PACKED  
ADVENTURE**



**ON SALE  
AT YOUR  
NEWS-  
AGENT'S**

**NOW!**

# STARBLAZERS

IN THE CONQUEST (16)  
OF SPACE



The Russians were extremely keen to get back into the space race. They decided to launch a converted one-seater Vostok capsule. On 12th October, 1964, Voshkod 1, containing three men, without spacesuits, Vladimir Komarov, Konstantin Feshtistov and Boris Yegorov, made 17 orbits of Earth and landed safely.